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Proposals site to the south of Queensbridge Farm, Overton-On-Dee, LL13 0LE.

Heritage appraisal and heritage impact assessment for proposed glamping pods.

For Steven Heighway

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aim of this report is to assess the potential for harm to heritage interest due to proposed development. The site is located within the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape and near to the setting of a grade II listed milepost (record number 14488[1]). The proposals comprise the installation of glamping pods at the crest of a wooded embankment, south-east of Queensbridge Farm.

1.2 Inspections were undertaken in January 2025 to gain an understanding of the proposal site, the surrounding area and the likely impacts of the proposals upon them.

1.3 It is understood that pre-application advice sought by the applicant did not raise any major heritage concerns in relation to the proposals. As follows; *the site lies within the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape. The pods should be located discretely so that cannot be observed within the wider landscape and therefore have minimal impact on the heritage asset[2].*

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

2.1 The site is located to the east of the A528 and directly north of a small brook. To the northeast of the site are a number of properties which all bear the Queensbridge name is some form. The GV II listed milestone is located adjacent to the northwest corner of the site directly across from the field gate entrance on the opposite side of the road. To the southwest corner of the site is the Queens Bridge which crosses the brook with traverses west-to-east at the southern site boundary.

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[1] See here: https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=14488

[2] Wrexham County Borough Council reference ENQ/2024/1154

3.0 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

3.1 This section of the report responds to paragraph 1.12 of Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment and aims to determine the heritage interests of the site and any heritage assets nearby that may be affected by the proposals. Paragraph reproduced below:

3.2 *Applicants and other organisations are strongly encouraged to make use of [the] Conservation Principles when considering development proposals and other works to historic assets. It is important for those responsible to understand the heritage values and assess the significance of the historic assets that will be affected. There are four heritage values which need to be understood before the significance of the asset can be assessed. Evidential value, Historical value, Aesthetic value, Communal value*[3].

3.3 The site is situated within the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape which was designated in 2001. The Summary description and reason for designation is as follows: *Geographically, Maelor Saesneg is that part of the pre-1974 county of Flintshire south east of the River Dee, formerly known as Flintshire Detached, and lying on the western fringes of the North Shropshire and South Cheshire plain. Topographically the landscape is uncharacteristic of Wales, with very little by way of prominent higher ground occurring, the otherwise flat or gently undulating surface of the plain reflecting the disposition in many places of extensive underlying deposits of materials left after the Ice Age. The surface of the plain drops almost indiscernibly from about 80m above OD at points along the southern limits of the area described here, to about 15m above OD on the flood plain of the River Dee which bounds the area on the north and west. The settlement pattern and economy of the area also owe much to influences from across the border in Cheshire, and consequently the historic character of the landscape is uncommon in Welsh terms, being more typical of the English border than of Wales and far more English than Welsh — as its name might suggest. Historically, the majority of Maelor Saesneg would have been subject to similar land use patterns with open fields divided into strips surrounding small medieval settlements. More recently, however, a distinction has arisen between the predominantly pastoral economy in the west and the arable fields of the east. As a result of arable farming, much of the landscape has been changed, with boundaries being removed to create larger fields and ploughing levelling all trace of former field system earthworks. Accordingly, the integrity of the historic landscape is best preserved in the western part of the area described here. Even so, in Welsh terms the scale of survival of this remarkable medieval field and cultivation pattern make this a very rare and valuable landscape. The area encompasses a number of historic settlements with their origins in the medieval or early medieval periods. To the west are the small towns of Bangor-on-Dee and Overton; Worthenbury (noted as the site of a possible Saxon burgh, and thus a great rarity in Wales) lies on the northern side; Penley and Lightwood Green to the south; and Horseman's Green and Tallarn Green to the east. Many of these minor settlements tend to be small linear developments tightly packed along what must be assumed to be a preexisting road network. Many are characterized by the redbrick houses and cottages locally typical of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, most possess one or two black-and- white timber buildings indicating earlier origins, as might be inferred from*

[3] Planning Policy Wales [2017], Techincal Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment. Paragraph 1.12.

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the elaborate field systems surrounding many of these hamlets. One exception to this pattern is Bangor-on-Dee which, while having many architectural similarities with its neighbours, clearly has a much older pedigree. Here was the site of a Dark Age monastery where the Venerable Bede records that 2000 monks were massacred, though the site of this is now lost. The town has a scattering of medieval buildings and a fine 15th-century stone bridge spanning the River Dee; today the town is perhaps better known for its racecourse, the only one in North Wales. In addition to these settlements, there are several splendid late medieval hall houses such as Althrey and Penley Old Hall, together with a significant number of early medieval moated sites, as for example at Halghton Lodge and Peartree Lane. Most moated sites were of manorial status, being the residences of lords or their stewards, or occasionally belonging to church institutions. Dating evidence indicates that this distinctive settlement form was introduced into the area in the 12th century with a proliferation of sites appearing in the 13th and early 14th centuries, thereafter continuing to be built and remaining in use until the 16th century. Their defensive capabilities were negligible; instead their function appears to have been to proclaim the high status of their occupants, with the moats most likely to have been used for keeping fish and game birds, watering stock, and for ornament. However, it is the legacy of medieval agriculture which gives this landscape area its most distinctive characteristic. The land use pattern is currently one of small hedged fields, often arranged in narrow strips, many of which retain the ridge and furrow earthworks of medieval cultivation. Such earthworks were the result of arable cultivation during the medieval period when the land surrounding settlements was divided into strips within large open fields and worked in common by the villagers. Although the ridge-and-furrow visible today was created by ploughing these strips, the pattern of small enclosed and hedged fields occurred later. Over time, the open fields were gradually enclosed, the new field boundaries often reflecting the shape of the former strips, producing typically long narrow fields. In some areas, however, such as those to the north of Sandy Lane and near Mulsford, the patterns of medieval cultivation are more complex and often at odds with later boundaries. The predominantly pastoral agriculture of more recent centuries has effectively fossilized the field patterns, retaining the ridge and furrow earthworks and the later hedged fields, and leaving a distinctly medieval feel to the landscape. Many of these fields contain small ponds and although the origin and use of these is not clear, it is possible that they may be clay pits, perhaps each one providing building material for a local medieval building. These field systems should not be seen in isolation, however, since the settlements to which they belong are as much a part of the historic landscape. With the exception of Bangor-on Dee and Overton, the settlement pattern remains one of small nucleated villages and hamlets which have changed little in plan since their medieval origins, adding coherence and integrity to the historic character of this very unusual, albeit still thriving and predominantly agricultural, Welsh landscape[4].

3.4 In addition, the site appears to be located in the Penley, Hanmer, Maelor South and Overton communities, Wrexham County Borough Historic Landscape Character Area (HLCA 1123) and is described in summary as follows:

[4] Available: https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/historiclandscape/FullReport?lang=en&id=HLW%20(C)%207

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3.5 *Varied field pattern resulting from enclosure of common open fields associated with ridge and furrow and former medieval manorial centres and late enclosure of areas of common grazing, 'green' encroachment settlements and remains of two large US Army hospitals and subsequent Polish hospitals.*[5]

3.6 As described above, the field forms a pleasant if nondescript and relatively featureless grassland area in the landscape. According to regressive historic mapping the field has not changed since the late 1800's and is depicted as it appears presently. Earlier mapping was not available. As described in the previous paragraphs, there are numerous historic ponds/ clay pits depicted in the surrounding fields, but none are present on the proposal's site. Historic mapping shows the embankment where the pods are to be located as having less dense tree growth which is to be expected given the relatively young age of the trees present currently. Overall, the field itself possesses little inherent heritage interest aside from its presence amongst the wider historic landscape and use, likely for arable purposes in the centuries past. The field does contribute to the general prevailing character of the area, that is of open fields that have been in use as such for many centuries.

3.7 Further consultation of the Archwilio online interactive historic environment record mapping system did not indicate any further information regarding the field or the proposals site.

3.8 The Queens Bridge is recorded on the CPAT regional historic environment record (PRN 37143)[6]. The bridge is built from coursed blocks of red sandstone with an archway built from brickwork. On the western side of the bridge are dates carved into the masonry. Cut into the stone is what appears to be a date of 1603 which is generally consistent with the appearance of the stone portion of the structure. Below this is a date of 1882 cut into a keystone which was likely placed when the brick archway was inserted. The bridge does not appear to be formally listed or scheduled. The Queens Bridge possesses illustrative and architectural interest by virtue of the nature of its construction and its age, dating to the early C17. This interest is not readily apparent from the roadside and is only visible from down below within the scrub.

3.9 The Queens Bridge milestone is grade II listed (record number 14488)[7] and therefore a portion of its setting could be considered to fall within the northernmost part of the field in which the proposal's site is located. In my view, the contribution that setting makes to the significance of the milestone is negligible, particularly so from the proposals field and given the nature of the tarmac road. It is reasonable to suggest that the proposals field does not form part of the setting of the milestone. The milestone has been recorded in the 'Buildings at Risk Database'. The reason for this is unknown as access to the database was not possible, but it is presumably due to the dense hedge and mound that is partially covering it.[8]

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[5] Penley, Hanmer, Maelor South and Overton communities, Wrexham County Borough (HLCA 1123) Available: https://heneb.org.uk/hcla/maelor-saesneg/penley-hanmer-maelor-south-and-overton-communities-wrexham-county-borough-hlca-1123/

[6] See here: https://archwilio.org.uk/her/chi3/report/page.php?watprn=CPAT37143

[7] See here: https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=14488

[8] See here: https://archwilio.org.uk/her/chi3/report/page.php?watprn=CPAT41662

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Figure 1: Shropshire sheet VI.5 published 1890. Proposals site indicated in red.



Figure 2: Flintshire sheet XXV.NW published 1900.

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4.0 STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 The proposals site, including the field, is of relatively little heritage interest when considered in isolation. However, it does form an unaltered if largely featureless part of the wider historic rural landscape. The Queens Bridge whilst not formally designated is of some historic interest given its age and date stones, however its setting, some of which is located within/ or abuts the proposal's site does not contribute to heritage significance to a great degree. The listed milestone is of similar heritage interest, however, the field does not contribute to heritage significance derived from setting.

5.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Planning Policy Wales and the supplementary planning documents states the following which provides a basis for determining harm, as follows;

5.2 *The planning system must take into account the Welsh Government's objectives to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. The historic environment is a finite, non-renewable and shared resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales. It contributes to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life. The historic environment can only be maintained as a resource for future generations if the individual historic assets are protected and conserved. Cadw's published Conservation Principles highlights the need to base decisions on an understanding of the impact a proposal may have on the significance of an historic asset.*[9][10]

5.3 *The Welsh Government seeks to protect areas on the register of historic landscapes in Wales*[11].

5.4 *There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage. For any development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*[12].

[9] Planning Policy Wales. Edition 12. Para 6.1.5.

[10] This document fulfils the requirements of a heritage impact assessment as required by paragraph 1.15 Technical advice note 24: The historic environment [2017]

[11] Planning Policy Wales. Edition 12. Para 6.1.20

[12] Ibid. Para 6.1.10.

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5.5 Technical advice note 24: The historic environment defines setting as: *The setting of an historic asset includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. Setting is not a historic asset in its own right but has value derived from how different elements may contribute to the significance of a historic asset.*[13]

5.6 The potential for harm therefore could be by virtue of the following:

1. Adverse intrusion and presence upon the proposals site which may harm the heritage interest of the Maelor Saesneg Registered Historic Landscape; either contextually, visually or via the potential for harm to buried archaeological remains.
2. The proposals may intrude upon the setting of the grade II designated milepost to a degree that harms the ability to appreciate heritage significance. This may be by virtue of encroachment of the proposals and/or intervisibilty of them with the designated asset.
3. The proposals may intrude upon the setting of the formally undesignated (assumed) Queens Bridge to a degree that harms the ability to appreciate heritage significance. This may be by virtue of encroachment of the proposals and/or intervisibilty of them with the bridge.

5.7 In response to point 1 above: The proposed glamping pods will not be readily visible from the main road by passing cars due to the thick roadside hedges and extensive planting which is proposed. The proposed glamping pods comprise lightweight timber structures that bear directly upon the ground and require minimal excavation works. Overall, the timber materials proposed for the pods and the extensive consideration given to landscaping works mitigate any harm, that may arise to heritage significance. In my view, whilst the proposed lodges comprise change upon the land they will not harm the registered historic landscape and heritage interest will therefore be preserved.

5.8 In response to point 2 above: The proposed glamping pods or associated access will not intrude upon the setting of the grade II designated milepost. Therefore, harm will not occur and the ability to appreciate heritage interest will be preserved as it exists currently.

5.9 In response to point 3 above: Given the dense undergrowth between where the pods are proposed to be sited and the bridge, the pods will not affect the ability[14] to appreciate heritage significance and heritage interest will be preserved as it exists currently.

[13] Techincal advice note 24: The historic environment. [2017] Para 1.25.

[14] The 'ability' to appreciate significance in this regard is very restricted by virtue of limited access.

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Figure 3: Proposals site.



Figure 4: Proposals site viewed from the north.

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Figure 5: Western side of Queens Bridge.



Figure 6: Eastern (far) side of Queens Bridge.

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