PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Full planning application for the change of use of The Trotting Mare Inn Free house to holiday accommodation and all associated works

at

Trotting Mare Inn

Overton

Wrexham

LL13 0LE

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Ref: HPL 12679

Document ref: 12679-202608-001

Date: August 2026

Rev:

1. Introduction

1.1 This statement has been prepared and submitted by Halls on behalf of Mr Millington. The application is for the change of use of the existing Free House and associated works.

1.2 This statement assists in identifying the context of the proposed application, to include an assessment of how the proposed development accords with the site context, alongside relevant national and local planning policies. This aims to set out other material considerations, to support the Council in their consideration of this application.

1.3 This full planning application follows a pre application with Wrexham Council, ref ENQ/2025/0140.

1.4 I trust the submitted details are sufficient to enable and support you in your consideration of this application. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

2. Site Description and Context

2.1 The application site is edged red on the attached plan. The site extends to approximately 0.1 hectares and consists of the Trotting Mare Free House and associated car parking area, the site lies just off the A528 at Knolton.

2.2 The Trotting Mare is an original piece of countryside architecture and was constructed in the 19th century. The Free House has historically operated as a traditional country pub, serving food and drinks to both local residents and visitors to the area.

2.3 To the rear of the Free House is The Trotting Mare Caravan Park. This is an adults-only park, open throughout the year and situated between the historic village of Overton-on-Dee, near Wrexham, and the Lakelands of Ellesmere in Shropshire. The grounds are uniquely located on the border between North Wales and Shropshire, upon the A528, forming an important gateway into and out of Wales.

3. Proposed Development

3.1 A pre application was submitted to understand if in principle if an alternative use could be found for the current freehold. Two uses were proposed:

- Proposed change of use The Trotting Mare Inn to 4 holiday let units allowing the existing building to form part of the successful tourism business to the rear of the building.

- Proposed change of use of the Trotting Mare Inn to a farm shop and café, this again will expand the tourism use of the site.

3.2 The pre application confirmed either proposed use could be supported in principle. Following further research in relation to understanding which proposal would be the most

successful have minimal impact on the building and surrounding area the applicant decided the holiday let route would be the most suitable and viable option.

3.3 The existing layout of the development reflects the character and context of the surrounding natural and built environment and makes effective use of the existing building and associated facilities. The proposal to change the use of the existing public house to holiday accommodation does not require any significant alteration to the established layout of the site and therefore ensures that the existing visual relationship with the surrounding rural landscape is maintained. The development makes efficient use of the existing built form while respecting the rural character of the site and its surroundings.

3.4 The application site benefits from an existing public footpath which runs alongside the existing caravan park. The proposed change of use of the public house to holiday accommodation will have no impact on the existing footpath, its alignment, accessibility or ongoing use. The proposal does not require any works to the footpath and will therefore ensure that the existing public right of way remains unaffected.

3.5 The proposed schemes will enable the caravan park to become an economically viable operation in the long term, and will enable the owner to continue to operate, and invest in other environmental upgrades and improvements within the site.

4 Change of use to holiday lets

4.1 Converting the Trotting Mare Inn into holiday lets represents a sustainable and forward-thinking solution that supports the long-term viability of the building while continuing to serve the local community.

4.2 By expanding the existing holiday let and caravan business, the applicants can diversify their income streams and adapt to evolving tourism trends, which increasingly favour self-contained, flexible accommodation in scenic rural locations. This approach not only helps preserve and maintain the existing building, preventing vacancy and disrepair, but also enhances the area's appeal as a visitor destination.

4.3 The development would contribute to the local economy by continuing employment opportunities and increasing footfall to nearby services and attractions. Importantly, it allows the building to retain a community-focused use, welcoming visitors and supporting rural enterprise in a way that aligns with sustainable development principles.

4.4 Unfortunately, The Trotting Mare Inn has experienced a noticeable decline in business in recent years, reflecting wider trends affecting the viability of public houses, particularly within rural areas. Rising living costs and the increasing cost of eating and drinking out have made socialising in pubs less affordable, whilst changing lifestyles and the growth of home-based leisure activities have reduced the frequency of pub visits. As a result, the pub has experienced a decline in footfall, which has significantly affected its ongoing viability.

4.5 The decline in viability is demonstrated by the fact that, over the last four to five years, the pub has had three different landlords, none of whom have been able to operate the business profitably, ultimately resulting in them relinquishing their respective leases.

4.6 The Applicant has marketed the property for both sale and letting, with very limited interest being received. This provides clear evidence of the difficulty in securing a viable operator for the existing public house use and demonstrates the need to identify a sustainable alternative use for the building.

4.7 In considering the potential loss of the public house, it is important to recognise that the proposal would not result in the loss of a viable or sustainable community facility. The evidence set out above demonstrates that the existing public house use is no longer economically sustainable, with repeated attempts to operate the business successfully having failed and limited interest having been received when the property has been marketed. The proposal would therefore not result in the loss of a successful or well-used facility upon which the local community is reliant, but would instead facilitate the sustainable reuse of an existing building which is currently struggling to remain viable.

4.8 The proposal would also have very limited implications in terms of employment. The public house has predominantly been operated by the owner/landlord, with limited staffing requirements, and therefore the proposed change of use would not result in the loss of a significant number of local jobs. Conversely, the proposed holiday accommodation would generate ongoing employment and economic activity through the management and maintenance of the accommodation, including cleaning, changeovers, grounds maintenance and general upkeep. The proposal would therefore provide an alternative source of economic activity associated with the site and help to ensure that the building continues to contribute positively to the local economy.

4.9 Furthermore, the loss of the public house would not leave the locality without access to comparable facilities. The surrounding area is served by other public houses, restaurants and hospitality establishments within the nearby settlements, providing alternative opportunities for residents and visitors to socialise and access food and drink. Given the limited viability of the existing use, the very limited employment associated with the public house, the availability of alternative facilities and the economic activity that would be generated by the proposed holiday accommodation, it is considered that the proposal would not be detrimental to the social or economic fabric of the locality. Rather, it would secure the continued viable use and occupation of the existing building, whilst providing an opportunity for the site to make a continued positive contribution to the local economy and tourism offer.

5 Planning Policy

5.1 Under section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales - Edition 12 – February 2024 (PPW)

5.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 was published in February 2024. The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes toward the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5.3 Sustainable Development is defined on Page 7 of PPW as follows: "the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the wellbeing goals".

5.4 Paragraph 1.18 sets out that "Legislation secures a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise to ensure that social, economic, cultural and environmental issues are balanced and integrated".

5.5 The importance of good design in development proposals is highlighted on Paragraph 3.3 of PPW where it is stated that:
"Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects of the development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surrounding area".

5.6 Chapter 5 of PPW considers how to achieve 'Productive and Enterprising Places' and sets out the importance of tourism to the Welsh economy stating at Section. 5.5;

5.7 "The planning system encourages tourism where it contributes to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion, while recognising the needs of visitors and those of local communities. The planning system can also assist in enhancing the sense of place of an area which has intrinsic value and interest for tourism. In addition to supporting the continued success of existing tourist areas, appropriate tourism-related development in new destinations is encouraged. In some places however there may be a need to limit new development to avoid damage to the environment or the amenity of residents and visitors."

5.8 At Para. 5.5.3, PPW recognises that tourism is especially important in rural areas:

5.9 "In rural areas, tourism-related development is an essential element in providing for a healthy and diverse economy. In addition to more traditional forms of rural tourism,

planning authorities should plan positively for active, green and cultural tourism where they are appropriate. Development should be sympathetic in nature and scale to the local environment."

Wrexham Unitary Plan (1996 to 2011)

5.10 Policy GDP1 – Development objectives

Policy GDP1 requires all new development to respect and complement the character of the site and surrounding area through appropriate scale, design, layout, materials and landscaping. Development should also provide safe and secure environments, make efficient use of energy and water, provide safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access, and be well connected to public transport, walking and cycling routes where possible. In addition, development must protect public amenity and the environment by avoiding unacceptable impacts from pollution, noise, odour, vibration and other associated hazards.

5.11 Policy EC5 – Special landscape area

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.

5.12 Policy H3 – Conversion of building outside settlement limits

Policy H3 states that the conversion of buildings to residential use outside settlement limits will only be permitted where there is no longer an agricultural need, alternative non-residential uses are unsuitable, and the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding. The proposal should retain any features of merit, avoid harmful intrusion into the landscape or access problems, not require public expenditure on services, and provide sufficient internal space to create a satisfactory dwelling.

5.13 Policy S9 – Loss of local facilities

Policy S9 states that outside Wrexham Town Centre and district shopping centres, the loss of shopping or commercial facilities will only be permitted where the existing use is no longer viable and reasonable attempts to sell or let the business over a 12-month period have been unsuccessful, or where the building is derelict or unsightly and the proposal would deliver substantial environmental improvements. In all cases, the loss of the facility must not have a detrimental impact on the social or economic character of the local area.

5.14 Policy CLF9 – Visitor Accommodation Outside Settlement Limits

Policy CLF9 states that visitor accommodation outside settlement limits will only be permitted through the conversion of existing buildings or extensions to existing serviced or self-serviced accommodation. Conversions must involve a suitable pre-1948 brick, stone and slate/tile building that is structurally sound and capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding, while retaining any features of merit and avoiding unacceptable impacts on the landscape, access or public services. The existing building must also be large enough to provide habitable accommodation without extension. Extensions will only be supported where existing buildings are fully utilised and cannot be further adapted, and where the extension is appropriately designed and scaled and does not adversely affect the landscape, green barriers or other important features.

Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (2013 to 2028)

5.15 Policy SP8: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise

"In recognition of the contribution farm diversification and small-scale tourism/business projects can make to the economy in rural areas, the Plan contains Policy EM4 (employment development outside settlement limits) and EM5 (visitor accommodation outside settlement limits), to support, in principle the re-use of buildings in rural areas, small scale rural tourism and business development, subject to specific criteria".

5.16 This policy looks to support new development which can positively contribute to the local economy by providing new employment opportunities and maintaining and enhancing the county's tourism, culture and leisure offer.

5.17 Policy EM5: Visitor Accommodation Outside Settlement Limits

"iv. Exceptionally new development that forms an integral part of an established and viable tourism or recreation facility provided that:

a) The visitor accommodation development is clearly subsidiary in scale to the tourist/rural recreation site; and

b) The development is of a high standard of design and does not represent a significant or harmful intrusion into the rural landscape."

5.18 "Tourist accommodation development in the open countryside that supports an existing tourist facility, attraction or asset but is also sympathetic to the natural environment and rural landscape will be encouraged."

5.19 "Touring caravan sites, glamping and camping will also generally be supported provided they are acceptably located and screened and provide adequate access and servicing."

6 Principle of Development

6.1 Both local and national planning policy supports development in relation to existing tourism assets in the open countryside where the proposal is compatible in terms of

location, siting, design and scale and well-integrated into the landscape so that it would not detract from the overall character and appearance of the area and in particular where it complements an existing tourism development or asset without causing unacceptable adverse harm to the enjoyment of that development or assets.

6.2 Tourism is an important component of the rural economy and can help to provide new jobs and it is therefore desirable to support appropriate tourism related developments in principle, whilst sustaining the outstanding natural beauty. Tourist development is encouraged because of its contribution to the economy in terms of visitor spending, supporting local business and employment generation.

6.3 The principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable as it involves the reuse of an existing rural building in a manner that supports sustainable development objectives set out in both national and local planning policy. The change of use from a free house to holiday accommodation would help to secure the long-term viability of the building, which has experienced a continued decline in its current use. The proposed use is existing and appropriate for the rural context, supporting the local economy through job creation. The proposals would ensure the building remains in active use, preserving its character and contribution to the area, and align with planning policies that encourage rural diversification, sustainable tourism, and the retention of community assets.

7 Design and amenity considerations

7.1 The proposed change of use has been designed to respect the existing character and appearance of the Trotting Mare Inn, ensuring that any alterations are sympathetic to the building's rural setting and architectural features.

7.2 To provide access to the proposed holiday let, a new entrance door is required within the front elevation of the building. The door has been carefully designed to replicate the appearance, proportions and detailing of the existing entrance door and will therefore appear visually consistent with the existing building. As a result, the proposed alteration will not appear out of context and will preserve the character and appearance of the building.

7.3 Any new additions or alterations have been carefully considered to enhance the functionality of the building while maintaining its traditional appearance.

7.4 In terms of amenity, the proposed use as holiday lets is low-impact and compatible with the rural surroundings. The site benefits from good separation from neighbouring properties, ensuring there will be no significant adverse effects in terms of noise, traffic, or overlooking. Adequate parking and access are provided within the existing site layout, and any necessary enhancements will be made to ensure safe and convenient use for visitors, staff, and nearby residents. Overall, the proposal seeks to balance the needs of the business with the protection of local amenity and landscape character.

7.5 Full plans have been provided to enable full consideration, which raise no material issues in relation to design nor amenity.

8 Highways and Access matters

8.1 There are no proposed changes to the highways and parking arrangements approved under previous applications. The existing access benefits from existing safe visibility arrangements in both directions.

8.2 The proposal will result in a reduction in potential traffic movements associated with the site. The existing pub could accommodate up to 72 covers at one time, whereas the proposed holiday let will accommodate a maximum of 6 guests. As such, the proposed use is expected to generate significantly fewer vehicle movements than the existing use.

9 Drainage

9.1 The proposed change of use will utilise the existing surface water and foul drainage infrastructure serving the site. There will be no increase in the footprint or floorspace of the building, and no additional drainage infrastructure is proposed as part of the development. The proposal will therefore not result in an increase in surface water runoff or drainage requirements.

9.2 In respect of foul drainage, the proposed change of use will result in a reduction in the intensity of the existing use of the building. The public house was previously capable of accommodating up to 72 covers at one time, whereas the proposed holiday let will accommodate a maximum of 6 guests. This represents a substantial reduction in occupancy and, consequently, a reduction in foul water generation and associated phosphorus loading.

9.3 The application is supported by a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which confirms that the proposed change of use would result in a reduction in phosphorus levels associated with the site. The reduced occupancy and associated reduction in foul water discharge will therefore make a positive contribution towards reducing nutrient loading within the River Dee catchment and will not add to the existing phosphorus pressures affecting the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

10 Noise and Amenity Considerations

10.1 It is considered that occupiers would continue to have an open and attractive outlook and intervening features would obscure most views. As such, it is not considered that the amenities of occupiers of nearby residential properties would be detrimentally affected in terms of outlook. The proposal would require minimal change to the exterior of the existing building, however this would not affect the overall appearance. There is existing extensive planting along the road along with bund/buffer areas within and surrounding the site.

10.2 In respect of noise, there is physical separation and intervening features as described above which mitigate any impacts and generally, tourist accommodation uses are not incompatible with the use of surrounding residential properties. The proposed

development would not generate any additional noise. Any noise from traffic would not be materially different from those using the local highway network

10.3 Overall, considering the proposal is to change the use of the public house to holiday lets, it is considered the amenities enjoyed by the occupants of neighbouring residential properties would continue to be ensured and safeguarded in accordance with local policy.

11 Ecology and Landscape

11.1 The application is supported by a Green Infrastructure Statement. The statement confirms that the proposal will have no impact on the site's green infrastructure and the erection of a bird and bat boxs will ensure the proposal will create an ecological enhancement.

11.2 There will be no alterations to the roof of the proposed building, and all works required to facilitate the holiday let use will be internal. Therefore, the proposals will not impact the roof structure or provide opportunities for disturbance to bats or nesting birds, and a bat and owl survey is not considered necessary.

11.3 Due to the existing screening of the site and the depth of the valley, the proposed development continues to safeguard the key features of the landscape.

12 Conclusions

12.1 This full application seeks to explore the change of use of an existing free house to allow for additional holiday let accommodation to secure a sustainable future for the building while preserving its character and continued contribution to the local area. The current use as a free house has seen a steady decline, reflecting wider trends affecting rural pubs, and is no longer considered viable in its current form.

12.2 The proposal would only require minimal construction and development as the site is already laid out, screened and set out to accommodate the existing free house.

12.3 This appraisal has demonstrated that potential impact of the proposed development is limited. There will be no impact on landscape character and visual impact will be minimal due to the existing extensive planting.

12.4 As the proposal is in full compliance with the adopted polices within the Local Plan and National planning polices and given there are no barriers to the proposed development, Wrexham Council are kindly invited to support this application.