

# BOWLING BANK FARM

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**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE ERECTION OF 16NO. SAFARI TENTS (COMPRISING CHANGE OF USE TO D2), CONVERSION OF EXISTING STABLES TO A CAFE, SHOP AND BAR (COMPRISING CHANGE OF USE TO MIXED A1 AND A3), CONVERSION OF EXISTING BARN TO STORAGE FOR THE SAFARI TENTS (COMPRISING CHANGE OF USE TO D2) AND PROVISION OF CAR PARKING, LANDSCAPING AND OTHER ANCILLARY DEVELOPMENT AT BOWLING BANK FARM, WORTHENBURY**

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## PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 Mr Hopkins (the applicant) is proposing development (including change of use) on land within Bowling Bank Farm, Mulsford Lane, Worthenbury, Wrexham. The Proposed Development comprises three elements, the first being the conversion of existing stables to a café (A3 use), shop (A1 use) and bar (A3 use) with an ancillary storage area, office and WC facilities. The second element comprises the erection of 16no. safari tents to provide accommodation for a 'glamping' experience – the popular way to experience camping with the comforts of an equipped kitchen and bathroom and outside decking area. The third element is the provision of 2no. parking areas (providing a total of 27 parking spaces). Two package sewage treatment plants and a substation would also be provided and landscaping would be undertaken to provide an outdoor seating area and complement the existing trees and hedgerows.

1.1.2 The application site (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') is shown on Drawing 2316-02-002 and is 7.1 hectares in size.

### **1.2 The Site and Surroundings**

1.2.1 Bowling Bank Farm is located within the administrative area of Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC). The Site is located to the east of Worthenbury village, approximately 7.4km south east of Wrexham. Bowling Bank Farm is surrounded by agricultural land to the north, south and east. Access is gained to the farm via a private access road taken from Mulsford Lane.

1.2.2 The farm as a whole comprises a main agricultural building, ancillary agricultural structures, extensive areas planted with a mixture of young trees including hazel, oak and beech (as detailed in the Arboricultural Report at Appendix A), access tracks and tracks formerly used as gallops. There are areas amongst the woodland that have been left unplanted and these would be used to locate the safari tents now proposed. Mature trees and hedgerow also feature in the site and along the site boundaries.

1.2.3 The nearest residential properties to the stables are located approximately 35m west. The nearest residential properties to the glamping area are located approximately 280m to the west.

1.2.4 The Site is located within Flood Zone A.

1.2.5 The WCBC Unitary Development Plan and Site is located within designated open countryside and a Special Landscape Area.

### **1.3 Pre-application Advice**

1.3.1 Prior to Mr Hopkins acquiring the barn, stables and additional land a request for pre-application advice was submitted to WCBC in 2017 concerning a proposal to install lodges/log cabins (rather than tents) as glamping accommodation along with a shower block and reception area in the eastern part of the site. Although the Proposed Development differs from that proposed in the pre-application advice request, the policies and site designations detailed in the pre-application advice response have been considered.

### **1.4 Community Engagement**

1.4.1 To be completed following the statutory Pre-application Consultation Process.

### **1.5 Planning History**

1.5.1 The WCBC online planning applications portal has been searched for applications at the site made within the last 5 years.

1.5.2 Planning permission P/2016/1174 was granted on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017 for the 'Erection of New Timber Stables with Attached Store Room for Feed, Bedding and Horse Tack' at the site.

1.5.3 An application (Reference P/2018/0639) for prior approval concerning a proposed agricultural building was approved by WCBC on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

1.5.4 Retrospective planning permission (Reference P/2018/0664) was sought in August 2018 for an access track leading from Mulsford Lane in to the Site and was granted on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

1.5.5 In addition to the above applications which have been made in the last 5 years, planning permission P/2012/0188 is also considered relevant. Planning permission P/2012/0188 was granted on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and granted consent for the 'Change of use of agricultural building for bottling and packaging of mineral water'. Despite the application being granted, there was notable local objection to application P/2012/0188. These objections related to issues such as traffic impact, the bottling plant being less required for the area than a shop or public house, contamination and land stability issues relating to a proposed bore hole, and light pollution. The Proposed Development would not give rise to issues related to the concerns raised on application P/2012/0188 and would provide the village of Worthenbury with the local amenities of a shop, café and bar.

## **2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

2.1.1 The Proposed Development comprises the following elements:

- the conversion of an existing stables to a bar, café, shop and ancillary office, storage and WC facilities;
- the erection of up to 16 no. safari tents on existing clearings within existing woodland;
- the installation of services infrastructure to provide each pitch and the stables with utilities connections (electricity, water and foul drainage);
- the provision of 2 no. main parking areas (regularisation of the existing yard areas to the north and south of the stables and provision of an overflow grass parking area adjacent to the existing agricultural tool shed;
- the installation of 2 no. sewage package treatment plants;
- the installation of a District Network Operator kiosk;
- landscaping;
- utility connections; and
- external lighting.

2.1.2 The proposal would require change of use of part of the existing stable to a combination of A1 and A3 uses to allow for the use of the existing stables as a bar, café and shop. The area of woodland where the safari tents would be located and the barn that would be used for the storage of the glamping furniture would require change of use to D2.

2.1.3 The Proposed Development would offer amenities to the village of Worthenbury through sustainable rural diversification. The proposed glamping development and operation of this aspect of the business would support the café, shop and bar enterprises. The Proposed Development would bring a vacant building back into use and all aspects of the Proposed Development have been designed so that they would integrate sympathetically into the rural landscape. It is considered that the amenity of Worthenbury and the cohesion of the community would be enhanced through the proposed shop, café and pub.

#### Phasing

2.1.4 It is proposed to erect the glamping tents in a phased approach to test and refine the business model. It is anticipated that up to 4no. tents would be erected initially, with additional tents erected each season in response to demand, up to the maximum of 16no. Glamping tents would typically be available to rent between March and October. Outside of these times the tents would be winterised and soft furnishings, bedding etc. would be stored within the existing barn/stables.

#### Design

2.1.5 The stables would be refurbished and re-clad with timber to the walls and re-roofed with insulated profiled steel cladding to improve the appearance of the barn and ensure it is fit for purpose. Details of the proposed materials are provided on Drawing 2316-02-008.

2.1.6 The proposed safari tents would be located within an area of existing woodland, as shown on Drawing 2316-02-003. Existing areas of sparse vegetation within the woodland would be used as pitches for the tents. The tents would be 11.5m in length, 5.4m wide and 3.6m high at the ridge of the roof. The tents would be made from a hard-wearing canvas material constructed over a wooden post frame. The roof of the tents would be olive green in colour with a camel coloured inner tent featuring PVC windows. The canvas and frame would be attached to the base using industrial strength ratchets. There would be a timber decked terrace area at the entrance to each tent.

- 2.1.7 Parking spaces would be provided in two areas, one to the north-east of the stables and one to the south. In addition overflow parking would be provided adjacent to the agricultural tool shed. These parking areas will provide parking for visitors to the café/shop/bar as well as the glamping visitors. Three electric vehicle charging points would be provided (to meet the requirement set by Planning Policy Wales 10 that a minimum of 10% of parking spaces in new non-residential should provide electric vehicle charging points).
- 2.1.8 Two sewage package treatment plants would be installed. One of these plants would be located to the north-east of the stables, treated water would discharge to an existing ditch within the ownership of the Applicant. The other plant would be located west of the glamping area and treated water would discharge to adjacent ditches. The dimensions of each treatment plant would be 6.4m in length, 2.9m width and 3.2m in height. The treatment plants would be installed mainly below ground with a plastic access lid and control panel installed above ground level.
- 2.1.9 The District Network Operator kiosk is approximately 2.4m in length, 0.8m wide and 1.5m high would house electrical connection equipment. This structure would be located adjacent to the western boundary of the site and would be a brick structure with a waterproof roof.
- 2.1.10 Service connections (water and electricity) would be provided to each pitch and the stable through a channel running between the stables, sewage package treatment plant and each pitch ( as illustrated on Drawing 2316-02-011).
- 2.1.11 Landscaping including the planting of trees and grass seeding would be provided to enhance outdoor seating areas.
- 2.1.12 External lighting would be directed away from site boundaries / on-site linear features. The majority of lighting would be of the Passive Infra-Red type, set on a short timer and orientated towards the ground. Minimal lighting is proposed at the outdoor seating areas however, this would be sensitively designed to minimise impact on amenity and biodiversity.

#### Access

- 2.1.13 The Proposed Development would be accessed via an existing access into the Site off Mulsford Lane. The Site could be accessed by cars, pedestrians

and cyclists. Separate car parking areas would be provided for visitors to the glamping site and visitors to the shop, café and bar. 27no. car parking spaces would be available in the main parking areas. The overflow car park would also be available.

- 2.1.14 It is anticipated that most visitors to the glamping site would travel to the site by car. These visitors would park to the rear of the shop, café and bar and Numerous footpaths are accessible from the village of Worthenbury. It is anticipated that whilst staying at the glamping site, visitors would walk and cycle in the local area and would be encouraged to utilise the facilities on site.

#### Hours of Opening

- 2.1.15 The proposed café and shop would be open everyday from 9am until 4pm. The proposed bar would be open between the hours of 6pm and 11pm.

## **2.2 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening**

- 2.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations') prescribe the types of development for which EIA is mandatory (Schedule 1 development) and others which may require an assessment if they have the potential to give rise to significant environmental impacts (Schedule 2 development).

- 2.2.2 Given that the main new development at the site (aside from the re-use of the existing barn and stables) is for tents which would be used as holiday accommodation during the Spring and Summer months, and the location of the development outside the settlement boundary of Worthenbury, the most relevant category is Category 12 Part (c). Category 12 relates to 'Tourism and Leisure' and Part (c) concerns 'Holiday villages and hotel complexes outside urban areas and associated developments'. The Proposed Development exceeds the threshold in Column 2 of the table in Schedule 2 to the EIA Regulations (the area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares). As such, it is necessary to consider whether the development is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

- 2.2.3 The potential environmental effects of the Proposed Development have been considered (as detailed in Section 3.0, Appendix B and Appendix C). These potential effects concern ecology and landscape and visual and it has been concluded that no significant environmental effects would arise as a result of



the Proposed Development. As such the proposals are not considered to represent EIA development and therefore the application does not need to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

### **3.0 POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

#### **3.1 Landscape**

##### The Special Landscape Area Designation

3.1.1 The Site is located within a Special Landscape Area (as recognised in the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996-2011), and would remain within the extent of this designation following the review process carried out to inform the emerging Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013 - 2028). Current planning policy relating to SLAs (UDP Policy EC5) is concerned with the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, high standards of landscaping and design, and minimising impacts from distant viewpoints. The UDP does not provide any information setting out reasons why particular areas are considered worthy of SLA designation.

3.1.2 As part of the evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan, the document Special Landscape Areas Study<sup>1</sup> was prepared. This provided a review of the existing SLAs within Wrexham, in accordance with current national planning requirements and guidance, and identifies proposed revised boundaries and a statement of value and significance for each SLA within Wrexham.

The document identifies that the Site is located within the boundaries of proposed SLA 005: The Maelor, close the northern edge of this SLA. The summary description of SLA 005 is as follows: "*There are elements of estate parkland farming and an attractive mix of small to medium sized field parcels with frequent woodland blocks and copses and a high incidence of field and mature hedgerow trees (predominantly oaks). The area has an intimate and settled feel to it reinforced by the small field pattern, winding network of country lanes and low proportion of out of scale or modern built development. The area bears a strong visual link in terms of landscape type, pattern, vegetation cover and appearance with the North Shropshire and Cheshire Plain, but it is the frequency of field ponds and high incidence of mature*

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<sup>1</sup> Wrexham County Borough Council, 2017. EBNB03 Special Landscape Areas Study

*hedgerow trees combined with the rich archaeological/medieval heritage that belies the areas true character and distinct identity”<sup>2</sup>.*

The document identifies the following ‘special valued landscape qualities and features of key importance to planning policy and landscape management’: *“Development and management proposals in the SLA and within its landscape setting should take account of the following special valued landscape qualities:*

- *An important historical, archaeological and cultural landscape that is vulnerable to changes in farming practice – conserve historical character;*
- *Conversion of farm buildings and diversification of traditional farmland – potentially visually and historically damaging;*
- *Effects of economic diversification and recreation in the countryside. The area is perceived as an attractive and unspoilt agricultural area with attractive, traditional and characterful villages and farmsteads;*
- *Biodiversity management and enhancements - Hedgerow and hedgerow tree conservation and restoration;*
- *Maintain traditional land use and management – encourage traditional land management techniques;*
- *Enhance biodiversity and habitats types – improve age range in vegetation cover”<sup>3</sup>.*

3.1.3 The Site is largely wooded. It is atypical of proposed SLA 005, which largely comprises farm fields and boundary hedgerow vegetation. The photographs presented on Figure 1 illustrate the wooded nature of the Site and the various buildings and structures present within it.

#### The Proposed Development and the Special Landscape Area Designation

3.1.4 The Proposed Development includes works to the existing stables, which would improve the appearance of this somewhat dilapidated structure and would therefore contribute positively to the local character and visual amenity.

3.1.5 The location of the proposed safari tents within existing woodland means that they would not be clearly visible from outside the Site. Where glimpses of the tents are available, the colours chosen (green and camel coloured) would

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid, page 69*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid, page 70*

minimise their visual impact. The presence of the tents would have no wider influence upon the character of the surrounding landscape, or upon views.

- 3.1.6 The proposed main car parking areas would occupy a small area of the Site and would be located on what are existing areas of hard standing located either side of the existing stables. Existing hedge vegetation to the south and new planting to the north would enclose the car parking areas. Presently, views toward the proposed car parking are available from both north and south, but following the implementation of the new landscaping and changes to the management of the existing hedge to allow this to grow taller, visibility would reduce over time and cars parked at the Site would be well screened.
- 3.1.7 Overall, the Proposed Development would not have a detrimental effect upon the Special Landscape Area designation, and indeed would integrate sympathetically into the rural environment and make a positive contribution to the appearance of the SLA designation through the renovation of an existing dilapidated building. The operation of the Proposed Development would inevitably require ongoing and proactive woodland management, which is likely to provide further landscape enhancements over time. In relation to the special qualities and management guidelines for proposed SLA 005, the Proposed Development would not adversely affect any of these.

## **3.2 Ecology**

- 3.2.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the area proposed for glamping has been undertaken and accompanies this statement (Appendix B). No statutory or non-statutory designations have been identified within 1km of the glamping area.
- 3.2.2 The glamping area comprises dense scattered semi-mature trees, improved and unmanaged grassland, mature intact hedgerow, mature 'gappy' hedgerow, and mature trees.
- 3.2.3 This assessment determined that the glamping area as a whole offers negligible bat roosting opportunity however, there are good foraging and commuting opportunities. It is proposed that bat boxes would be installed onto mature trees.
- 3.2.4 No bird nests were identified during the survey however due to the abundance of vegetation and mature hedgerows at the Site the opportunity for nesting

birds is high. Vegetation removal works, where required, would be undertaken outside the bird breeding season. Or if work must be undertaken during the breeding season, inspections for nests would be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to the start of any works. Nest boxes would be provided.

- 3.2.5 Environmental DNA sample testing has been conducted on significant bodies of standing water within 250m of the glamping area. This survey identified Great Crested Newts to be present in 2 of the 9 waterbodies sampled; one of these waterbodies is located within the eastern segment of the glamping area, the other is located approximately 80m south of the Site. Strict Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAM's) are to be followed with regard to GCN and are deemed sufficient to mitigate any potential impacts upon reptiles at the glamping area. These RAMs include a monthly visit to the site by an ecologist to ensure that all vegetated areas to be impacted upon by the development remain managed (mown) to a short sward height (less than 150mm in height).
- 3.2.6 The PEA recommends that any artificial lighting during and post-development is to be directed away from site boundaries/ on site linear features and all future external lighting will be of the Passive Infra-Red type, set on a short timer and orientated towards the ground.
- 3.2.7 The PEA did not identify any field signs indicating current use of the Site by badgers.
- 3.2.8 No evidence of invasive species were identified in the glamping area.
- 3.2.9 Subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures described above and within the PEA, no detrimental effects regarding protected/notable species are considered likely to arise.

### **3.3 Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 3.3.1 The Site is located within Flood Zone A and not at risk of flooding. The proposed parking areas and paving around the building would increase the amount of impermeable surface at the Site. These areas would drain to swales and discharge to ditches in a sustainable drainage system. As such, no issues with regard to surface water drainage are anticipated to arise from the Proposed Development.

3.3.2 Foul sewerage from the stables and the tent pitches will be treated at 2no. sewage package treatment plants. Clean treated water from these plants would be discharged to adjacent ditches within the Applicant's land ownership and this would be registered with Natural Resources Wales. As such, foul sewage would be dealt with on Site without any need for connections to the mains sewer network.

### 3.4 Transport

3.4.1 The Proposed Development is forecast to generate only a minimal level of traffic on the local highway network.

3.4.2 Based on TRICS-based trip rates that have been obtained for each individual proposed use (with the exception of the café which is forecast to be wholly ancillary to the other primary uses), the scheme will generate in the order of 122 two-way movements per day if each use is considered separately. This would be a highly robust approach. The tables setting out the trip rates are provided in Tables 1 – 3 below.

**Table 1 - Gross Cumulative Weekday Trip Generation Calculations**

Use Element	AM Peak		PM Peak		Daily	
	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep
Pub	0	0	2	2	20	20
Shop	2	2	2	2	23	23
Tents	1	1	2	1	17	18
Café	Ancillary					
<b>Gross Totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61</b>

**Table 2 - Linked Trip / Local Allowances**

Use Element	AM Peak		PM Peak		Daily	
	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep
Pub	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Shop	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Tents	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Café	Ancillary					

**Table 3 Gross Cumulative Weekday Trip Generation Calculations**

Use Element	AM Peak		PM Peak		Daily	
	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep
Pub	0	0	1	1	10	10
Shop	1	1	1	1	12	12
Tents	1	1	2	1	17	18
Café	Ancillary					

<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>
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- 3.4.3 However, in practice the nature and mix of the proposed uses will inevitably lead to some linked trips occurring, for example where visitors to the campsite utilise the proposed bar, café and shop elements. Furthermore the elements on the site are relatively low key in terms of their size and so are more likely to attract a more local regular customer base from the village, who would arrive on foot.
- 3.4.4 If a reasonable allowance for these linked / local trips is made, then it can be seen that the proposal would generate in the order of 78 two-way trips per day, with negligible trips made during the normal highway peak hours (see Table 3).
- 3.4.5 From a transport and highway perspective this does not present any material concerns, particularly given that the site access arrangements are satisfactory and the highway safety record around the site is enviable. The alignment, geometry and nature of Mulsford Lane at the site access inhibits traffic speeds on the approaches to the site access and the level of achievable junction visibility from the site access is good in both directions. The online Crashmap resource indicates that no accidents have been recorded along the route within the most recently available 20 years' worth of data (1999-2018 inclusive).

## **4.0 PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 This section undertakes an appraisal of the Proposed Development in the context of the current extant and emerging planning policy framework.

### **4.2 Planning Policy Context**

#### ***The Statutory Development Plan***

- 4.2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (September 2004) and paragraph 1.21 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 10 – December 2018) requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2.2 In the case of the Proposed Development the relevant statutory Development Plan comprises the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996-2011, which was adopted on the 14th February 2005.

***Material Considerations***

4.2.3 Material considerations can include national planning policy, emerging development plan policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), as well as other land use and environmental factors which could influence the acceptability of development.

4.2.4 It is anticipated that such material considerations will include (but not be limited to) the following:

*The Emerging Development Plan*

- Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013 - 2028) - Deposit Plan (March 2018)

*Other National, Regional and Local Planning Considerations*

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10 (December 2018)
- Technical Advice Note 6 – Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)
- Local Planning Guidance Note No.3 - Converting Rural Buildings (March 2006)
- Local Planning Guidance Note No.17 - Trees and Development (December 2012)
- Local Planning Guidance Note No.32 - Biodiversity & Development

**4.3 Planning Policy Appraisal**

*The Statutory Development Plan - Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996-2011 (February 2005)*

4.3.1 The Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in February 2005. Its primary functions are to set out planning policies and to provide a basis for decisions on planning applications and to make proposals for development and the use of land.

- 4.3.2 Policies contained within the statutory Development Plan that are considered of particular relevance have been identified and an appraisal of the Proposed Development in the context of these policies is provided below.

*Policy PS2*

- 4.3.3 Policy PS2 requires that development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.

- 4.3.4 The elements of development proposed to the stables would enhance the overall appearance of the area through refurbishment of the stables and use of timber cladding and new doors and windows. Aesthetic improvements would be undertaken to the area surrounding the stable to provide an outdoor seating area and area for parking. The safari tents would be located at existing clearances within a tree-planted field and would feature colours (camel and olive green) that would enable them to blend in with the surrounding landscape, albeit the tents would not be clearly visible from outside the glamping area of the farm. The tents could easily be removed at the end of the operation of the development. Due to its size, the DNO kiosk would not affect the landscape character, open space or the quality of the natural environment. The package treatment plant would be submerged and would only be apparent from the area immediately surrounding the plant where the PVC caps would be apparent at ground level. As such, the package treatment plant would also not materially detrimentally affect these qualities. For the aforementioned reasons the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy PS2.

*Policy PS3*

- 4.3.5 PS3 requires that development should use previously developed brownfield land in preference to the use of greenfield land. The Proposed Development of the community café, shop, and bar and parking areas would utilise brownfield land which is currently underused land adjacent to Worthenbury village. Existing areas of hardstanding and existing access tracks would be made use of within the development. The greenfield areas of the Site affected by the development would be used as locations for safari tents which could easily be removed at the end of the development. The development of the tents and operation of a glamping business would support the café, shop and



bar businesses which will contribute to the sustainability of the village. For these reasons, the Proposed Development is considered to comply with Policy PS3.

*Policy PS4*

- 4.3.6 Policy PS4 requires that development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated within the existing transport network to reduce the overall need to travel and encourage use of alternatives to the car.
- 4.3.7 The Proposed Development is located outside the settlement boundary of Worthenbury. However, the Proposed Development comprises the refurbishment of an existing building adjacent to the settlement boundary to provide the facilities of a shop/café/pub for use by the local community. The provision of these facilities in this location would reduce the need for residents of Worthenbury to travel outside the village to access this type of facility and would therefore contribute to reducing their overall need to travel and add to community amenity.
- 4.3.8 The stables would be fitted with a new roof and new cladding and its appearance would be complimentary to the surroundings. Once visitors to the safari tents have travelled to the Site (it is anticipated this would be by car), they will be encouraged to cycle and walk in the local area during their stay at the Site and to utilise the facilities on Site. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be in compliance with Policy PS4.

*Policy GDP1*

- 4.3.9 Policy GDP1 sets out the general requirements for all new development and aims to achieve a high standard of sustainable development. The reason for the development is to facilitate a sustainable diversification business at the farm and the success of this will rely on visitors being attracted to the development and wanting to spend their leisure time there. As such, providing a high quality standard of development that is well considered in relation to its functionality, appropriate to its surroundings, and provides a safe, convenient and pleasant environment for people to visit have been a crucial factors in the design of the development.

- 4.3.10 The Proposed Development would not result in or be subject to flooding, soil erosion, landslides or contamination either on or off Site. The Proposed Development would contribute to the sustainability and well-being of the village of Worthenbury through the provision of local facilities and local employment opportunities. It is considered that the Proposed Development meets the requirements set out in Policy GDP1.

*Policy EC4*

- 4.3.11 Policy EC4 sets out how development proposals should conserve woodlands, trees, hedgerow and other natural landscape features and confirms that development that results in the loss of or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland Sites will not be permitted. The proposed safari tents would be located within areas left unplanted amongst a large area of young hazel, oak and beech trees and established boundary hedgerow. It is considered that the existing tree, hedgerow and woodland features at Bowling Bank Farm would enhance the Proposed Development and therefore they would be retained and managed to promote their development. The Proposed Development also includes the planting of trees. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be supported by Policy EC4.

*Policy EC5*

Policy EC5 concerns Special Landscape Areas and confirms the types of developments within these areas that will be subject to strict controls; rural enterprises are identified as an exception to these controls. Rural enterprises are not defined within the UDP. Technical Advice Note 6 (Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities) defines rural enterprises as:

*“land related businesses including agriculture, forestry and other activities that obtain their primary inputs from the site, such as the processing of agricultural, forestry and mineral products together with land management activities and support services (including agricultural contracting), tourism and leisure enterprises”.* (emphasis added)

- 4.3.12 In light of this definition, it is considered that a business which comprises the re-use of an existing rural building to provide facilities to a rural village, and the development of a small-scale tourist accommodation enterprise constitutes

a rural enterprise. As such, according to Policy EC5, the Proposed Development is not subject to the same strict controls other development within the Special Landscape Area would be subject to. Nevertheless, due to the nature of the Proposed Development, and the existing nature and appearance of Bowling Bank Farm, it is considered that the proposals would improve the appearance of the stables and promote the long-term management of the existing woodland at the Site, to the wider benefit of the SLA.

4.3.13 The existing extensive woodland and established hedgerow would provide screening to the glamping aspect of the development, and the colours of the safari tents have been chosen so that they blend in with the landscape. The tent structures would not be clearly visible from outside the Site and as such, their presence would have no wider influence upon the character of the surrounding landscape, or upon views.

4.3.14 The proposed main car parking areas would be enclosed by existing hedge vegetation to the south and new planting to the north. Over time, with the implementation of the new landscaping and allowing the existing hedgerow to grow taller, visibility would reduce over time and cars parked at the Site would be well screened.

4.3.15 As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy EC5.

*Policy EC6*

4.3.16 The Site is not located within or near a site allocated under policy EC6. The Proposed Development would retain the existing trees and plants on the Site and would introduce additional tree planting to complement this. A PEA has been completed and, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures detailed within the report, adverse effects regarding protected/notable species are considered unlikely to arise. In light of the above, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with Policy EC6.

*Policy EC12*

4.3.17 Policy EC12 concerns development and flood risk. The Site is located within Flood Zone A and would not be at risk of flooding. The development would also not cause an increase in flood risk elsewhere.

### *Policy PS11*

- 4.3.18 Policy PS11 concerns biodiversity and encourages the improvement of the biodiversity value of sites. As set out in Section 3 above, a PEA has been completed of the glamping area and has identified that with the implementation of the recommended standard mitigation measures, adverse effects regarding protected/notable species are considered unlikely to arise.
- 4.3.19 The woodland at the site will be managed to promote its biodiversity value wherever possible and the operation of the proposed businesses would support the landowner in achieving this.

### *Policy S7*

- 4.3.20 Policy S7 concerns retail outlets in the countryside. The proposed shop would be provided through the conversion of the existing stables which is located within open countryside. Policy S7 sets out the conditions that proposed retail development must satisfy in order to be permitted. The proposed shop meets all but one of these criteria: the criterion it would not comply with is to primarily sell goods or produce predominantly made or grown on the premises. However, the supporting text to this policy recognises the contribution that small scale shops make to the quality of rural life and confirms that the policy seeks to address the decline in the number of shops in rural villages.
- 4.3.21 The Proposed Development would provide an opportunity for a local shop to be provided in the village, supported by the complementary businesses of the proposed bar and the glamping accommodation. As such, although there is a degree of conflict with this policy in terms of the produce it would sell, the proposed shop would contribute to addressing the aims set out in the supporting text to this policy by providing a local shop in a rural village that does not currently have one.

### *Policy E5*

- 4.3.22 Policy E5 recognises that within some rural areas there is a need to “*provide employment, prevent the loss of services, and maintain a viable and balanced community*”. New employment development that would result in a loss of visual quality and landscape character and adversely affect agriculture will be resisted. The re-use and adaption of vacant buildings in the countryside can provide opportunities for small businesses which can provide employment

opportunities for local rural communities. The Proposed Development would provide employment opportunities through the re-use of existing stables and new development of safari tents and ancillary development. The proposed elements of new development would not adversely affect the landscape character or visual amenity. The re-use of the existing stables would improve the appearance of this structure so that it contributes positively to the local landscape character and visual amenity.

*Policy CLF10*

4.3.23 Policy CLF10 confirms that new camping sites will only be permitted where the site is well screened without the need for additional strategic landscaping, the site is not located within a Special Landscape Area and the site is not used for the storage of caravans which are not in use. The supporting text to the policy recognises the useful contribution to the economy that caravan and camping sites can make. However, the importance of siting caravan and camping sites to ensure that they do not have an impact on the landscape or cause inconvenience or danger to road users is also emphasised.

4.3.24 The proposed safari tents would be well screened by existing woodland. Although the tents would be located within the Special Landscape Area, due to the presence of existing screening and their design, they would not have a detrimental effect upon the Special Landscape Area. The tents would be stored in a dedicated area within the existing stables when they are not in use. The Proposed Development would not involve the transfer of caravans to or from the Site and hence would not lead to any inconvenience or danger as a result of caravan movements on the highway network. The development of the tents and operation of the glamping business would support the café, shop and bar businesses which will contribute to the sustainability of the village. As such, although there is a degree of conflict with this policy, due to the tents being located within the Special Landscape Area, the Proposed Development would not give rise to the concerns alluded to in the policy supporting text and would contribute to the rural economy and sustainability of the village of Worthenbury.

*Statutory Development Plan Appraisal Conclusion*

4.3.25 Based on the above appraisal there would be a degree of conflict between the Proposed Development and the policies concerning retail outlets in the

countryside and new camping sites with the SLA. However, the Proposed Development would comply with all other relevant policies. When considered in the context of the points listed below, it is concluded that the Proposed Development would comply with the UDP when taken as a whole:

- the lack of, and need for, a village shop/café and bar in Worthenbury;
- there are currently under utilised buildings at Bowling Bank Farm;
- the positive contribution that the proposed changes to the stables would make to the local landscape character and visual amenity;
- there are existing clear areas within the woodland area of the farm;
- the tents would be well screened; and
- the glamping business is required to support the café, bar and shop businesses.

### ***Material Considerations***

#### *Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013 - 2028) - Deposit Plan (March 2018)*

4.3.26 Wrexham County Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the County Borough. The LDP is the Council's land use plan that will establish where and how much new development will take place in the County Borough over the period 2013 – 2028. It will also identify which areas need to be protected from development and will replace the existing Unitary Development Plan (UDP, 1996-2011) once adopted.

4.3.27 The most relevant policies of the emerging plan are considered in the following paragraphs.

#### *Policy R6*

4.3.28 Policy R6 considers edge and out of centre retail development proposals and sets out criteria that such proposals must meet to be permitted. The proposed shop would be located adjacent to the village of Worthenbury and would be small in scale (26.9m<sup>2</sup> of shop floor space). The shop would play an important role in sustaining the village of Worthenbury through the provision of a local facility to meet local needs and enhance the rural economy. The shop would be developed through the conversion of existing stables and would be easily accessible on foot from the village. The proposed shop would not cause any

harm to the vitality, attractiveness or viability of any other retail centre. The Proposed Development is considered to accord with Policy R6.

*Policy EM5*

4.3.29 Policy EM5 considers visitor accommodation outside settlement limits and sets out criteria that new touring caravan and camping sites must meet to be permitted. Based on the background text set out under this policy in the Deposit Plan, the aim of the policy is to ensure that new touring caravan and camping sites must not have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside.

4.3.30 The proposed safari tents would complement the other Proposed Developments at the currently unoccupied Bowling Bank Farm. The safari tents would be accommodated within existing pitches at Bowling Bank Farm and have been designed so as to be unobtrusive in the landscape. The safari tents would have no wider influence upon the character of the surrounding landscape, or upon views. The proposed changes to the existing stables would improve the appearance of this structure and would benefit the local landscape character and visual amenity. The tents would be stored within a dedicated part of the stables when they are not in use. The Proposed Development would incorporate measures designed to avoid adverse impacts on the natural environment. Furthermore, the development of the safari tents and operation of a glamping business would support the café, shop and bar businesses which will contribute to the sustainability of the village. The Proposed Development as a whole would provide employment opportunities within this rural area of the borough, benefitting the rural economy. As such, the criteria set out in Policy EM5 would be met.

*Policy NE3*

4.3.31 Policy NE3 confirms that development will only be permitted where it would not cause unacceptable harm to trees, woodlands and hedgerows of significant public amenity, natural or cultural heritage value or those that provide important ecosystem services including mitigating the effects of climate change. The proposed glamping area is located amongst a large area of young trees. These trees would continue to be managed as part of the operation of the Proposed Development in order for them to continue to develop and enhance the glamping area. New trees would also be provided

as part of the Proposed Development. As such, the aims of this policy would be met by the Proposed Development.

*Policy NE5*

- 4.3.32 Policy NE5 concerns Special Landscape Areas and seeks to protect and enhance the character and quality of the particular landscape features for which the SLA has been designated.
- 4.3.33 The character and quality of the SLA would be protected by virtue of the safari tents being located amongst existing trees and due to the colours of the tents. The safari tents would not be clearly visible from outside Bowling Bank Farm, and as such, their presence would have no wider influence upon the character of the surrounding landscape, or upon views.
- 4.3.34 The other elements of the development would be located adjacent to the settlement boundary and would comprise the re-use and enhancement of an existing stables and enhancement of an unmanaged piece of brownfield land surrounding the barn. The proposed changes to the existing stables would improve the appearance of this structure and would therefore contribute positively to the local character and visual amenity.
- 4.3.35 The proposed car parking would be enclosed by existing hedge vegetation to the south and new planting to the north. Over time, with the implementation of the new landscaping and allowing the existing hedgerow to grow taller, visibility would reduce over time and cars parked at the Site would be well screened.
- 4.3.36 As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with this policy.

*Policy NE6*

- 4.3.37 Policy NE6 sets out the Council's requirements with regard to the treatment of waste water and river water quality. Foul water would be treated on Site using two sewage package treatment plants. There is not considered to be any conflict between the Proposed Development and Policy NE6.



#### *Policy DM1*

- 4.3.38 Policy DM1 concerns general development management considerations. The Proposed Development is not in conflict with Policy DM1.

#### *Policy SP2*

- 4.3.39 Policy SP2 directs new development to the settlement limits defined on the Proposals Map. The aim of this policy is to direct development to the most sustainable locations and to ensure that development meets the needs of the economy, environment and health. Although the Proposed Development would be located outside the settlement limits, the café, bar and shop aspects of the proposal involve the re-use of an existing building that is currently unoccupied. The glamping element of the proposal would not be appropriate within a built-up area as this would give rise to issues of amenity for local residents and would not provide a pleasant visitor experience. The proposed glamping area would be located approximately 180m east of the settlement boundary within an area of young woodland with existing clearances suitable for siting safari tents. The location of the proposed safari tents is considered to be a sustainable location for this type of development. The development of the safari tents and operation of the glamping business would support the café and shop facilities which would contribute to the sustainability of the village of Worthenbury. As such, although there is a degree of conflict with Policy SP2, it is considered that the thrust of the policy would be met.

#### *Deposit Plan Appraisal Conclusion*

- 4.3.40 The Deposit Plan does not restrict new camping sites from being located within Special Landscape Areas and recognises the importance of small scale retail stores in sustaining villages. Although there is a degree of tension with Policy SP2, as detailed in paragraph 4.3.38, the location of the development is considered appropriate due to its nature and scale and the positive contribution it would provide to the sustainability of the village of Worthenbury. The Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with the Deposit Plan, when considered as a whole.

#### *Local Planning Guidance Note No.3 Converting Rural Buildings*

- 4.3.41 This guidance note explains the approach the council take towards dealing with proposals to change the use of and conversion of rural buildings. The

guidance note emphasises that converted buildings should keep their original character. The existing stables and barn are of a utilitarian construction was and are not particularly distinctive or attractive. The structure is in a poor state of repair. The proposed conversion of the existing barn would provide visual enhancement to the structure through the provision of a new roof and timber cladding. The conversion would be in accordance with the thrust of this guidance note.

Local Planning Guidance Note No.17 - Trees and Development (December 2012)

- 4.3.42 This guidance note amplifies Policy EC4 regarding the protection of trees and the importance of trees in development design. The woodland and hedgerow on Site are a fundamental part of what makes the Site attractive for a glamping operation. This is because the trees and hedgerow would screen the glamping area from outside the Site and would contribute positively to the visitor experience of glamping. The Proposed Development would retain the existing trees on Site and continue to manage and nurture the woodland that has been planted on the Site. New trees would also be provided to complement the existing trees and hedgerow.

Local Planning Guidance Note No.32 - Biodiversity & Development

- 4.3.43 The guidance note amplifies UDP policies concerning nature conservation. A PEA has been undertaken and has made numerous recommendations for mitigation. The implementation of these mitigation measures would ensure that the Proposed Development would not give rise to any detrimental impacts on protected or notable species. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with this guidance.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10 (December 2018)

- 4.3.44 Paragraph 2.12 advises that:

*“the planning system is a very important policy, decision making and delivery mechanism. It should seek to maximise delivery of outcomes against all aspects of well-being/sustainable development, thus seeking to maximise contributions towards all of the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This can be achieved by adopting a placemaking approach”.*

4.3.45 Chapter 4 of PPW concerns Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking and sets out the Key Planning Principles to enable the goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act to be realised through land use planning. This chapter also identifies the national sustainable placemaking outcomes which should be used to inform the preparation of development plans and the assessment of development proposals. These outcomes are as follows:

- Creating and Sustaining Communities;
- Making Best Use of Resources;
- Maximising Environmental Protection and Limiting Environmental Impact;
- Growing Our Economy in a Sustainable Manner; and
- Facilitating Accessible and Healthy Environments.

4.3.46 Paragraph 4.3.39 requires that *“Where car parking is provided for new non-residential development, planning authorities should seek a minimum of 10% of car parking spaces to have ULEV charging points”*.

4.3.47 Chapter 5 concerns Productive and Enterprising Places and paragraph 5.6.1 states:

*“A strong rural economy is essential to support sustainable and vibrant rural communities. The establishment of new enterprises and the expansion of existing business is crucial to the growth and stability of rural areas”*.

4.3.48 Paragraph 5.6.4 recognises that there are certain industries that cannot be accommodated within settlements. Paragraph 5.6.5 recognises that *“new businesses in rural areas are essential to sustain and improve rural communities”*.

4.3.49 Chapter 4 concerns Active and Social Places. Paragraph 4.3.40 states that:

*“Local and village shops, and public houses provide an important role in the local community and their loss can have a detrimental impact, particularly in rural locations”*.

4.3.50 Paragraph 4.3.41 states:

*“In rural areas, planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to applications for conversion of suitable village properties to shops and for extensions to village shops designed to improve their viability. A positive*

*approach should also be taken, subject to amenity considerations, to re-establishing public houses, especially in villages which have lost such provision. The lack of public transport in rural areas should not preclude small-scale retail or service development where this will serve local needs”.*

4.3.51 The Productive and Enterprising Places theme (Chapter 5) of PPW recognises the development necessary for economic activity, including rural enterprise and tourism.

4.3.52 Paragraph 5.5.2 states that:

*“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”.*

4.3.53 Paragraph 5.5.3 states:

*“In rural areas, tourism-related development is an essential element in providing for a healthy and diverse economy. Here development should be sympathetic in nature and scale to the local environment”.*

4.3.54 As set out previously, all aspects of the Proposed Development would be designed to a high standard in order to provide a high quality experience for visitors and ensure effects on the environment are minimal. These aspects are significant interests for the Applicant as they will encourage repeat business and contribute to the long-term viability of the development. The development would involve the re-use of an existing stables, use of an existing access and use of existing clearances within woodland. As such, the location of the development is considered to be sustainable and appropriate for the type of development proposed. It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would give rise to unacceptable disturbance or other adverse effects.

4.3.55 The Applicant is seeking to make a significant long-term investment through the Proposed Development. There are currently no shops or café facilities in Worthenbury and the Proposed Development would address this and assist the economic activity of the rural area and the sustainability of the village. As such, the Proposed Development is considered to be supported by PPW.

Technical Advice Note 6 – Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)

4.3.56 The TAN advises that:

*“Planning authorities should support the diversification of the rural economy as a way to provide local employment opportunities, increase local economic prosperity and minimise the need to travel for employment”.*

4.3.57 This note also considers the re-use and adaption of rural buildings and advises that in assessing planning applications for the re-use or adaptation of a rural building, the primary consideration should be whether the nature and extent of the new use proposed for the building is acceptable in planning terms.

4.3.58 The Proposed Development would comprise a significant investment into a Site which is currently vacant. The investment would provide local facilities to the village and employment opportunities within this rural area of the borough. As set out in the above appraisal, the Proposed Development is considered to be in accordance with local and national planning policy and therefore is considered to be acceptable in planning terms. As such, the Proposed Development is supported by TAN 6.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

4.3.59 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) is concerned with improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

4.3.60 The Act puts forward seven well-being goals which all public bodies listed in the Act (including Local Authorities) must work towards achieving. The seven goals are:

- A prosperous Wales;
- A resilient Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A more equal Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities;

- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and
- A globally responsible Wales.

4.3.61 The Act requires that public bodies operate through a sustainable development process to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

4.3.62 It is considered that the Proposed Development would contribute to the well-being goals set out in the Act in the following ways:

- The provision of flexible jobs in a rural location;
- The provision of local amenities for an existing community which would improve its viability, sustainability and attractiveness;
- The materials used in the development would be sustainably sourced wherever possible;
- The Proposed Development would utilise an existing vacant building and would integrate sympathetically into the surrounding rural environment; and
- The development of a sustainable tourism business which would encourage visitors to the local area, support the rural economy and encourage people to enjoy spending time outdoors.

4.3.63 In light of the above, the Proposed Development is in accordance with the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

#### **4.4 Policy Conclusion**

4.4.1 An appraisal of local and national planning policy has been completed. Overall, support exists for the Proposed Development which would re-use an existing agricultural building, support the rural economy, provide amenities to support the sustainability of the village of Worthenbury, and protect and enhance the character and quality of the Special Landscape Area.

4.4.2 A degree of tension exists between the Proposed Development and some aspects of the adopted and emerging local planning policies, specifically concerning the location of the development outside the settlement boundary and within the Special Landscape Area. However, when the nature of the development and the contribution it would make to the sustainability of Worthenbury village are taken into account, the Proposed Development has

been found to be in accordance with relevant local planning policy when taken as a whole.

4.4.3 PPW sets out the most up to date land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. The support for the Proposed Development provided by PPW is significant. PPW recognises the need for a strong rural economy, the importance of local village amenities, and the contribution that tourism can make to a healthy and diverse economy, rural diversification and social inclusion, The plan period of the UDP expired in 2011 and the UDP does not provide the same level of support as PPW for development that would deliver these benefits. PPW is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In light of the above, and until a new LDP is adopted, it is considered that PPW must be given significant weight in the determination of planning applications in the borough.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1.1 The Proposed Development Site is Bowling Bank Farm, Mulsford Lane, Worthenbury, Wrexham.

5.1.2 The Proposed Development comprises the following elements:

- the conversion of an existing stables to a bar, café, shop and ancillary office, storage and WC facilities;
- the erection of 16no. safari tents on existing pitches within existing woodland;
- the installation of services infrastructure to provide each pitch and the stables with utilities connections;
- the provision of 2no. parking areas;
- the installation of 2no. sewage package treatment plants;
- the installation of a District Network Operator kiosk;
- utility connections;
- external lighting; and
- landscaping.

5.1.3 The proposal would require change of use of the existing stables to a combination of A1 and A3 uses to allow for the use of the existing stables as a

bar, café and shop. The area of woodland where the safari tents would be located and the part of the stables/barn where the glamping equipment would be stored would require change of use to D2.

5.1.4 The Proposed Development is considered to have numerous benefits in terms of sustainability, as follows:

- it would utilise an under utilised stable and barn;
- it would provide community amenities located within walking distance of residential properties;
- it would provide visitor accommodation within a woodland setting that would help fund ongoing woodland management and support the shop, café and bar businesses;
- it would contribute positively to the landscape and visual amenity;
- it would not give rise to adverse environmental impacts; and
- it would provide employment opportunities and contribute to the rural economy.

5.1.5 The Proposed Development has been considered in the context of the relevant local and national planning policy documents and guidance and has been found to be in accordance with these documents when considered as a whole. As such it is requested that planning permission is granted without delay.