

**Notes as a basis for the Response by WPRA to the Planning Application to build  
1400 Dwellings off Wrexham Road, Chester**

October, 2017

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The land is owned jointly by house builders, Redrow and Taylor Wimpey. At the present time an application has been received from Redrow for full permission to build 509 houses plus an application for outline permission for a local centre to include a primary school, health centre, shops, etc. An application from T-W is expected but has not yet been received. Documents are available to view on the Council website or in the Lache Library.

1.2 WPRA and our local councillors have studied the documents and discussed the issues with the builders, council officers, Welsh Water and other parties. We accept that planning permission for the development is likely to be approved eventually but wish to influence the development in order to minimise adverse effects on the quality of life of WP residents.

1.3 The following is a summary of the issues, our objections and proposals where appropriate.

**2. Transport**

2.1 The Development will result in significant additional congestion on the surrounding road network, particularly at the Overleigh roundabout. The underlying philosophy of the developer's transport assessment is that this increasing congestion will force people to change their travelling habits and make more use of bus services, cycling and walking, such that only minor improvements of the wider highway network are necessary. Whilst we understand that a degree of modal change is inevitable, we think that this conclusion is hopelessly optimistic and therefore unacceptable.

2.2 One of these minor improvements is at the Overleigh roundabout itself where a modest widening of the circulatory area and some of the approach roads is proposed (including Lache Lane) which will increase capacity in the off-peak periods. Whilst we broadly welcome these proposals - especially mindful of the alternative such as the changes made at the so-called 'hamburger roundabout' near Sainsbury's in similar circumstances - they will do little to stop increased delays in the morning peak period where the capacity constraint is not the roundabout but the Grosvenor Bridge.

2.3 Our conclusion is that only the construction of the long-proposed Chester Western Relief Road, involving a new river crossing, will bring significant long-term improvement to congestion south of the river. Part 1 of the Local Plan, which removed the land alongside the Wrexham Road from the Chester green belt, also provides for the eventual construction of this scheme. We think that the developers should make a substantial financial contribution to the development of the Western

Relief Road, as was required of B&Q when they built their then new store at Sealand Road.

2.4 We welcome the proposal to re-route the existing No.1 Chester-Wrexham bus service through the northern part of the new development. This will not only move the bus service a little nearer existing residents of Westminster Park but will also mean that passengers will not have to cross Wrexham Road when joining or alighting from south-bound buses. We will press for this re-routing to be achieved as early as possible once the development has started.

### **3. Numbers and Types of Dwellings**

3.1 We believe that there is a significant demand for bungalows and smaller houses whereas the plans indicate a concentration of 3, 4 and 5 bedroom houses - we think there should be a greater mix of housing types and sizes.

3.2 The Grosvenor Estate has expressed concern about the location of affordable houses which seems to indicate that they would only be built towards the end of the development. We endorse their concern and urge the builders to provide affordable housing in proportion at each development phase.

3.3 We are concerned that the Council's original requirement for 830 dwellings in its strategy grew to 1300 and now appears to be 1400. This latest increase is to be achieved by moving the environmental area into greenbelt land to the south of the original designated area. Additional housing will serve to exacerbate the transport problems and we feel that some curtailment of numbers is preferable.

### **3. Removal of Surface Water and Sewage**

3.1 We met Welsh Water in 2015 who asserted that removal of sewage from the development (through WP) will require upgrades of pipes and pumping facilities. They stated that a review, taking up to a year, would be required and we understand that this has now been done. The upgrade will need to be financed by the developers.

3.2 We understand that the developers plan to have attenuation tanks to hold surface water to be released at no greater speed than it currently runs off the fields. This is acceptable.

### **4. Education**

4.1 The developers have said that they will provide the land and services for a primary school - the issue is when it will be built. We feel that, to avoid further traffic congestion and disruption to existing schools, the new school should be ready close to the beginning of the development and that a planning condition should be imposed to ensure that the developers make the serviced land available when required.

4.2 To this end we have had several meetings with the Christleton Learning Trust, who are interested in building and running the school, and with Council Education officers.

## **5. Health Facilities**

5.1 Existing South of the River facilities are working at full capacity and new health facilities will be needed for the development. A two GP surgery is included in the planning application but, we understand the Health authority has a preference for a single centre covering everyone in the area. We are concerned about the inconvenience of this to many users, particularly those without cars or with disabilities, as well as the resulting added car journeys. We are shortly meeting health officials to discuss.

## **6. Ecological Mitigation**

6.1 Several physical and desktop surveys have been carried out to assess the value of the habitats and fauna on the development site. A number of important ecological features have been identified including, in terms of habitat, the hedgerow network (of County level importance), the ponds, and the trees. In terms of fauna, the area supports important populations of great crested newts, other non-GCN amphibians, bats, barn owls and farmland birds.

6.2 It is the intention of the developers to keep less than half of the hedgerows, 65% of the trees and to remove all of the ponds. They will therefore have to create a mitigation area for these species to move to/be moved to. The Inspector who overturned the Greenbelt status of the land intended that the ecological mitigation area should be located within the development site, however Paycause have submitted an additional planning application to use Greenbelt land to the south-west of the site and extending over Lache Lane (17/02444/FUL). It has been noted that part of this land lies in the path of the proposed Western Relief Road.

6.3 We are concerned that the habitats of this area will be destroyed and that species which rely on the hedgerow corridor network and ponds to travel, forage and breed will be lost or fragmented. The proposed mitigation area is a long way away from many retained habitats, e.g. the pond at the back of Meadow House, linked to great crested newt and toad populations, and the oak tree used by Barn owls for nesting. Ultimately it may be on the opposite side of the Western Relief Road, when constructed, and thus will be completely divorced from retained ecological features.