

LAND AT HANKELOW VILLAGE AUDLEM

HOUSING FEASIBILITY STUDY January 2009

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LAND AT HANKELOW VILLAGE

FEASIBILITY STUDY

1. Introduction

1.1 The housing needs survey for Audlem and the surrounding smaller settlements undertaken in 2007 established that there is a need for local affordable housing in the area. In the case of Hankelow the requirement would be for 6-10 houses. *Not so.*

1.2 There is no prospect of providing this number of affordable houses within the Hankelow village development boundary. There are no vacant sites and if any were created their value would preclude affordable development.

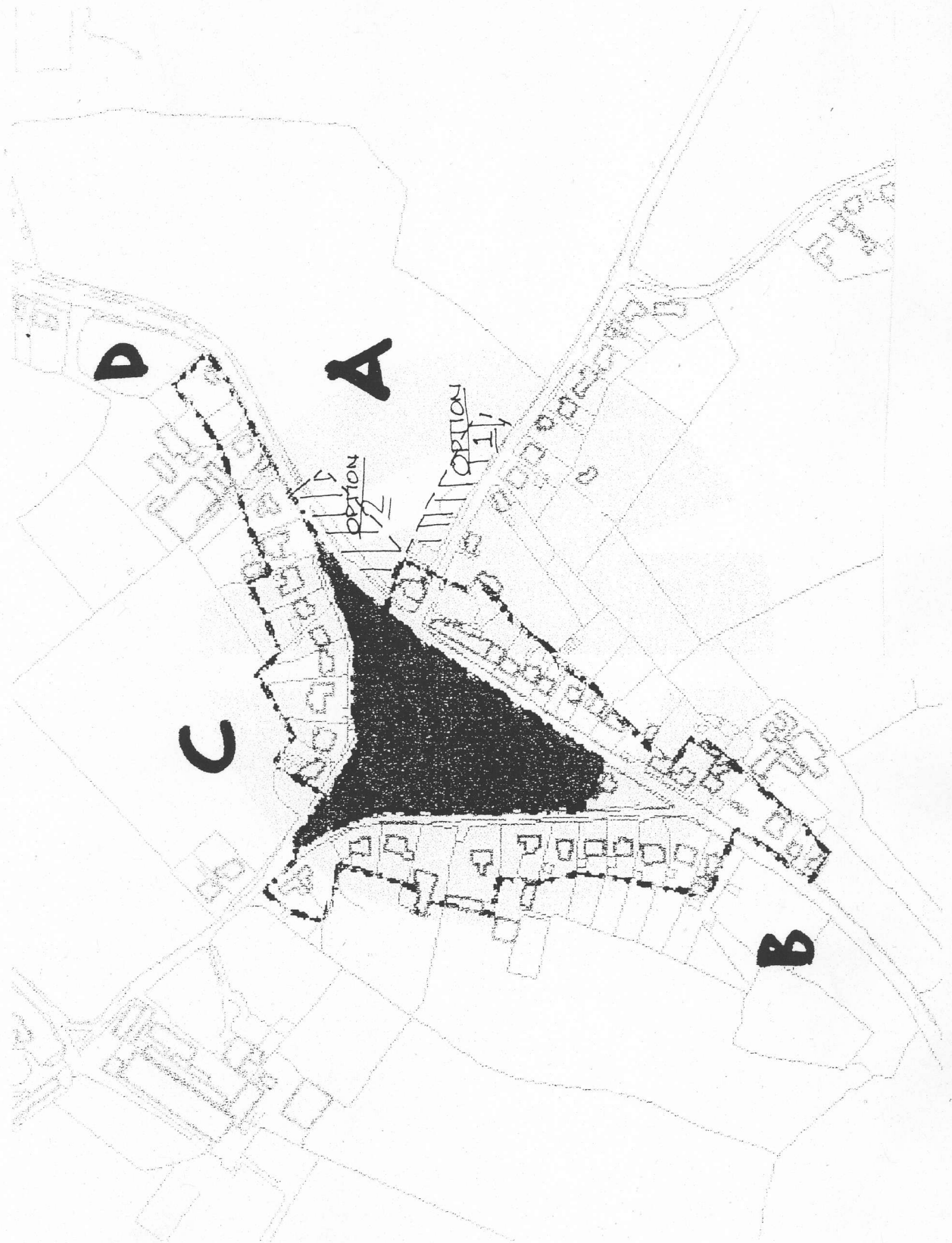
1.3 The local needs housing has therefore to be an exceptions site or located elsewhere. The criteria for exceptions sites require that such land should adjoin the village development boundary and be adjacent to the existing housing development. There also needs to be ready access to the development. There appear to be four sites in Hankelow, which fulfil these initial requirements, referenced A, B, C & D on the attached site plan.

1.4 This feasibility study focuses on proposals for the site marked A. This site is known to the Authorities as being available and has been the subject of informal planning proposals. The site owners are Mr C E Thelwell, Mrs J M Thelwell and Mr D E Thelwell. Discussion of the merits of sites B-D is intended to be fair but it is not known if these sites would be available for low cost development.

2. Alternative Sites

2.1 Site A

2.1.1 The land area of site A is approximately 4.72 ha, of which about 0.40 ha should provide sufficient land for 6-8 houses and the circulation space. Depending on the location of the housing



the balance of the land could continue in agricultural use or in other uses suitable for the Village location.

2.1.2 Subject to further discussions with the Highways Dept. safe access to the site is available from Audlem Road in the position identified in the traffic survey conducted by Savell Bird & Axon in 2006. This access provides sightlines of 120 metres both ways 2.4 back from the kerb

2.1.3 The Southern part of the site is central to the village and the part which is closest to existing developments. The criteria for exceptions sites would apply to around five acres of the existing field. However, only 0.4 ha would be needed for the housing needs in the foreseeable future.

2.1.4 There are at least two suitable locations for development of housing on site A. For purposes of the feasibility 'Option 1' will be a site fronting onto Long Hill Lane and 'Option 2' will be a site with frontage on Audlem Road.

2.2 Site B

2.2.1 The land area of the suggested enclosure is 0.285 ha and should be sufficient for 4-5 house units. Further adjacent land might be available to the side or rear.

2.2.2 Access via an existing drive would provide the best sight lines to Audlem Road, 100 metres plus to the North. Southwest the sight line would be limited to 70 metres unless further land was available for boundary adjustment. If the existing drive was not available for access then the site would not be viable.

2.2.3 The site is adjacent to the development boundary on two sides and would be part of the gateway into the Village approached from Audlem.

2.3 Site C

GOODWINS UNAWARE.

2.3.1 The whole site comes to approx. 1.95 ha, of which 1.5 ha could retain its current agricultural use. The whole 6-8 houses could be accommodated.

2.3.2 The site fronts onto Hankelow Hall Lane. Access would be onto the lane with sight lines of 60m to the left and 50m to the right.

2.3.3 This site is reasonably central to the Village. A corner of the village green is visible and the site front is adjacent to the development boundary and the side nearly so. Development would link up to two houses to the West which are outside the development boundary.

2.4 Site D

2.4.1 This site is 0.235 ha and should be suitable for 3-4 houses.

2.4.2 Providing a new access would be a problem due to a limited sight line to the South. There are two access ways bordering each side of the site. The Nook is on the South side and serves six houses further to the South. There is a wide farm access to the North of this site.

2.4.3 The side of the site is adjacent to the Village boundary. There are further houses beyond the farm access to the North. A development here would have the character of infill development.

2.5 Discussion

2.5.1 **Impact.** The question of impact is subjective but important if a development is to be welcomed by existing residents in the village. In the writers opinion, the impact of development on the village would be greater at sites A (option 2) and B. Site A (option 1), C and D would have a low impact on the village.

2.5.2 Access. Each of the sites B-D appear to have sight line problems.

In the case of Site B which fronts out onto Audlem Road this aspect could be solved if the development is able to have control over the height of boundary treatment over adjacent land to the South.

Site C has a narrow frontage to the lane. This limits the sight line to the West nearside. This might be acceptable on a country lane subject to Highways Dept. approval.

Site D also fronts onto Audlem Road and its use appears to depend on whether the adjacent accesses are acceptable to Highways and available for multi-use.

2.5.3 Suitability for Housing Use. The prospective tenants of rural needs houses will be familiar with the area and will have preferences which can be canvassed later. Generally, the locations away from major roads are to be preferred. This would advance the claims of sites A (option 1) and C. These two alternatives also offer enough land for the whole development. Even if development is phased, there is economic advantage in being able to concentrate on a single site both for the building process and ongoing management. Access roads for a 6-10 house development would be constructed to adoptable standards. Other factors such as the suitability of the ground and levels and services appear to be adequate in the identified locations.

3. Case for Development of Site A

3.1 Land Use

3.1.1 The present use is agricultural. An expert assessment of this particular part of the farm owned by the Thelwell family is attached at Appendix A.

3.1.2 Continued use of agricultural land remains appropriate in the context of the village centre but 'set aside' would not be appropriate. A visual quality is required for this location and also a need for the land to be seen as useful. However the village's need for open green space as such is satisfied with the

size and quality of the nearby Village Green. This is central to the village and the defining element in the villagescape. The Village Green together with the White Lion pub, give Hankelow its unique character.

3.1.3 The change of use to local needs housing from agricultural use is in accordance with planning policy provided that the needs are confirmed by a local survey. It is unlikely that brownfield land will be available and therefore agricultural land of marginal quality will be the next consideration. The incentive for landowners to seek approval for exceptions sites has to be social and practical rather than solely financial as the land value on planning approval would be a low multiple of agricultural value.

3.1.4 For the purposes of this study it is assumed that approval will be sought for change of use of 0.4 ha of Site A and the remainder would remain in agricultural use or be developed for social and recreational uses for the benefit of the Village and neighbourhood. Either way, the open 'green' character is expected to remain. Further study and community surveys would be needed to be undertaken to establish if any other amenity uses would be viable and are therefore outside the scope of this paper.

3.2 Context

3.2.1 The larger part of the residential property at Hankelow is contained within the development boundary. However the further houses which are outside the boundary are still part of the village community. Excluding the working farm houses, there are approximately 28 residential properties or 45% of the whole village which is outside the development limit. Most of these are adjacent to the land at A. It follows that the proposal to develop a limited number of local needs houses will not be out of context.

3.2.2 The relationship of the existing open green spaces to the village needs to be considered. The village has an open feel if the observer is driving through on the Audlem Road. This aspect would be modified somewhat if Site A (option 2) were developed but not lost. The new houses would view the 'toe' of the Village Green. Para 2.5.1 above also refers. Houses on

Site A (option 1) would tend to build up the village character without impacting on the Green

3.2.3 The development on Site A (option 2) has already been explored by Northern Affordable Homes with a sketch scheme. This was felt to have major impact on the village – see also paragraphs above. This option is therefore not discussed further in the study.

3.3 Policy

3.3.1 The summary of the Housing Needs Survey is attached as Appendix B. The location of the housing units to be provided to fulfil these local needs does not have to be in Hankelow and could for example be in Audlem. This location would still be local enough for many tenants or co-owners. However, decanting population has always been problematic and there would be issues for car ownership and transport. Availability of land within development limits for affordable housing depends on there being sufficient larger commercial schemes to provide the social units through 'planning gain' and cross subsidy. This source may be in short supply for several years to come.

However, the policy does not exclude nearness, granting suitable exceptions land is available, as appears to be the case at Hankelow. The granting of an exception to policy needs to be balanced by gains or benefits which should arise, i.e.:-

- ❖ Closeness to family and locality
- ❖ Availability of affordable and accessible land
- ❖ Scope of development to enhance village and support facilities
- ❖ Problematic existing uses of the land, which applies in this case

3.4 Design

3.4.1 A sketch layout of 8 Nos affordable houses is shown in Appendix C. The houses are in pairs of semi-detached units. The units could be provided in pairs in different sizes, probably with a mixture of two bed and three bed layouts. The size of a typical duplex will be a similar scale to the larger detached houses in Hankelow. The plot sizes would permit car parking on individual sites. The layout is intended for illustration purposes only and would need to be developed in conjunction with the Local Authority and the participating Housing Association.

3.4.2 The access road (see also 2.1.2 above) would be constructed to adoptable standards with a pavement on one side. The road is shown with a gentle curve leading to a T junction with drives each side to serve the individual units, parking and turning.

3.4.3 Key considerations in the siting are the existing natural landscape features of trees and pond. The sketch shows how these could be retained and enhanced. The group is shown linked with a footpath leading across Audlem Road to the path at the tip of the Hankelow Village Green. Further landscape will be developed to enhance the overall environment.

APPENDIX A

Summary of Agricultural Appraisal

I. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Rostons following instructions from Mr D E Thelwell, Standpipe Cottage, Ellesmere Lane, Penley, Wrexham LL13 0LP, for his land at Hankelow, Audlem near Crewe Cheshire which is farmed by R J & M A Thelwell of Lodge Farm, Hatherton, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 7PG.

I.1 The Land

The total field amounts to 11.447 acres (4.633 hectares) the land is currently farmed by Mr Richard Thelwell. This is an isolated block of poorer quality agricultural land.

I.2 Purpose of report

This supporting statement has been prepared to accompany an application for part of the land to be put forward as a site for affordable housing in the Audlem Ward within the district of Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council.

This statement aims to set out why the land is marginal for agriculture and it represents an opportunity for Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council to satisfy the identified needs for affordable housing within the Audlem Ward and wider Crewe & Nantwich Borough.

This statement aims to set out why this block of land represents an ideal location for such a use and should be read in context of the report prepared by R & A Netherwood, Chartered Architects.

Accordingly, Rostons have visited the land to collate factual information about the existing use of the land its condition and suitability to support profitable agricultural enterprises.

2. THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

This is dealt with in the accompanying report from R & A Netherwood, Chartered Architects.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE EXISTING USE OF THE LAND

The field is currently occupied by Messrs Thelwell at Lodge Farm, Hatherton which is approximately 2.5 miles away.

Due to the nature of local land and the fact that the land is surrounded on 3 sides by housing and to the east by Hankelow Golf Club, it is an isolated block of agricultural land that makes it more marginal and difficult to farm.

4. **FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND CROPPING**

The issues associated with the isolated position of the site and the poor quality of the land further increase its marginality as land that can be profitably farmed.

There are significant areas of the field that cannot be farmed due to poor drainage, soil type and historic uses that mean the land is not suitable for any form of agricultural activity. The plan attached at appendix 2 shows the areas shaded in blue that are poor quality land.

The proximity to the golf club, means that a significant area of land to the east of the field is prone to golf balls being hit over the hedge and landing in the field. This is potentially damaging to grazing livestock if the field were to be used for grazing and damaging to farm machinery that might enter, such as combine harvesters.

If golf balls were to enter the silage crop harvested from the land, this would again be potentially harmful to livestock.

4.1 Grazing and Grass

The field could be let for grazing purposes or kept in house for grazing purposes. An indicative value would be in the region of £40-£50 per acre for seasonal grazing rights and it has a marginal price equivalent for Messrs Thelwell to graze it themselves.

The isolated nature of the field increases the difficulty in using the field for grazing purposes as livestock would be away from the farm and difficult to supervise and manage.

If the land were used for forage conservation, either for silage or hay, due to the poor quality land crops would be low yielding and expensive to grow. As the land is isolated it would be more expensive to harvest and transport the crops back to the farm.

4.2 Arable Cropping

The poorly drained areas mean that arable crops do not perform well, especially in years of high rainfall. The areas shown in blue extend further into the field making it difficult to plough and cultivate the land, leading to very low yield and stunted crops of low value and marginal profitability.

If the land were let to grow maize or other arable crops, a rental figure would be between £60 and £80 per acre. Better quality high yielding land could attract prices in excess of £120 per acre.

If the land were used for the contract growing of maize, good maize crops attract in the region of £350-£400 per acre, however it is likely that this field would attract a significantly reduced income, in the region of £225 per acre as the crops would be of lower feed value.

4.3 Environmental stewardship schemes

The field is unlikely to be suitable for entry into any environmental scheme as the land is isolated and the adjoin golf club areas are not managed in an environmentally enhancing or beneficial way.

4.4 Financial Performance

The table of gross margins and cost of production figures for Winter Wheat, Maize and Grass crop attached at appendix 3 shows examples of how crops grown on this land are unlikely to be profitable.

Winter Wheat - Cost of production:- £150 per ton, the current market price in £90 per ton.

Maize - Cost of production is £29.96/ton or £299.60 per acre. The market values of Maize silage range between £18-£22/t or down to £225 per acre (for poor crops) respectively.

Grass – Cost of production is £49.70 per acre to assume one cut of silage and subsequent grazing of the crop. When added to the previously indicated values of between £40-£50 per acre for seasonal grazing, then any profits earned from the growing of grass crops would be extremely marginal on this land.

5. **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

It is shown this isolated block of agricultural land has marginal value for agricultural purposes and could be better used for community and social purposes in supplying areas for green open access land along with some areas being used for the supply of plots for the construction of affordable housing.

The report from R & A Netherwood, Chartered Architects, goes on to explain how this land could fit within the affordable housing needs of Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council.

APPENDIX B

Summary of Housing Needs Survey

Audlem Ward Rural Housing Needs Survey Assessment
November/December 2007

On the 7th November 2007 a rural housing needs survey questionnaire was sent out to all the households in the Audlem ward. The purpose was to assess the housing needs in the ward particularly in respect of affordable housing.

The response was excellent with a very good return rate and some 'enthusiastic' answers.

The results are shown firstly by the whole ward and then broken down into parishes.

There will appear to be anomalies in many of the results. This is for a number of reasons: some of the questions were multiple choice; some of the questionnaires were not filled in correctly and some of the questions were not completed. There is no criticism whatsoever of the respondents. Although every attempt was made to keep the questionnaire as simple as possible it inevitably confused some. However it is felt that the assessment is as accurate as practicable.

Bob Vass

East Cheshire Rural Housing Enabler

January 2008

Number of Questionnaires

	Sent	Returned	Returned %
Ward	1660	559 (9 with Parish not specified)	34%
Audlem	889	302	34%
Buerton	201	46	23%
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	154	53	34%
Hankelow	110	51	46%
Newhall	306	98	32%

Respondents were asked if there were any adults in the household who wished to form a separate household. These are termed 'Hidden' Households (percentages are shown in relation to the number of returned questionnaires)

	Number	Percentage
Ward	77	13.7%
Audlem	31	10.3%
Buerton	5	10.9%
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	17	32.1%
Hankelow	5	9.8%
Newhall	18	18.4%

Where the 'hidden' household is required outside the parish or borough and a lack of affordable housing is a factor.

	Number	Percentage
Ward	41	53%
Audlem	14	45%
Buerton	1	20%
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	11	65%
Hankelow	2	40%
Newhall	13	72%

When move is required

	0-1 Year	1-2 Years	2-3 Years	3-5 Years
Ward	32	23	10	5
Audlem	13	8	4	3
Buerton	1	3	0	1
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	8	4	3	0
Hankelow	2	2	1	0
Newhall	7	6	2	1

Where is accommodation preferred (multiple choice question)

	Number
Audlem	37
Buerton	16
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	23
Hankelow	16
Newhall	17

Minimum Number of Bedrooms required in 'hidden' households

	1+	2+	3+
Ward	17	35	5
Audlem	6	16	5
Buerton	1	2	0
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	3	7	4
Hankelow	1	2	1
Newhall	5	8	3

Numbers of 'hidden' households with children

	1 Child	2 Children
Ward	2	4
Audlem	0	4
Buerton	0	0
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	1	0
Hankelow	0	0
Newhall	1	0

Preferred Tenure of 'hidden' household (multiple choice question)

	Renting	Subsidised ownership	Residential Care	Open Market housing
Ward	23	29	1	32
Audlem	12	10	0	10
Buerton	1	2	0	3
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	6	7	0	6
Hankelow	1	2	0	3
Newhall	2	7	1	11

Number of persons that have moved out of their parish or the borough within the last 5 years and would wish to return

	would wish to return	Unsure
Ward	61	49
Audlem	33	31
Buerton	10	3
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	6	6
Hankelow	3	4
Newhall	9	5

Combination of the total number of 'Hidden' Households and those wishing to return to the area (answering 'yes' to above)

	Hidden Households	Wishing to return	Total
Ward	77	61	138
Audlem	32	33	65
Buerton	5	10	15
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	17	6	23
Hankelow	5	3	8
Newhall	18	9	27

What type of tenure would be considered by those wishing to return to the area (multiple choice)

	RENTED	sUBSIDISED OWNERSHIP	oPEN MARKET OWNERSHIP
Ward	30	33	63
Audlem	20	22	38
Buerton	4	5	10
Dodcott cum Wilkesley	4	5	4
Hankelow	2	2	4
Newhall	0	0	7

APPENDIX C

Sketch Plan of Development

