Planning Statement

Darland High School
Chester Road
Rossett
Wrexham
LL12 0DL

Prepared for:

Wrexham Association Football Club Limited

Prepared by:

Savills
2 Kingsway
Cardiff
CF10 3FD

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. This Planning Statement ("Statement") has been prepared on behalf of Wrexham Association Football Club ("WAFC" or "the Club") in respect of the Academy Development at Darland High School, Chester Road, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 0DL ("the Site").

1.1.2. The delivery of a new Academy training facility at Darland High School is considered a key component in the Club gaining status as an EFL Category 3 Academy from the 2024/25 season, following a successful Full Audit Assessment. The training facility will be used by the WAFC Academy teams, from ages nine to 18.

1.1.3. This Application seeks to provide two new buildings to support the proposed Academy, which will include changing rooms as well as a small ancillary office, plant areas, meeting rooms, medical room, medical office, gymnasium, and a new classroom. A further building consisting of two shipping containers is proposed in the south east of the playing fields to serve the pitches.

1.1.4. An application is being submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council ("WCBC") as the Local Planning Authority ("LPA") for:

"Full Planning Permission for the Construction of Sports Academy Buildings"

1.1.5. A detailed description of the proposals, including a breakdown of the elements for which full planning permission are being sought, is provided in Section 3 of this Statement.

1.2. Application Documents

1.2.1. The application documents comprise:

- Application forms and Ownership Certificates;
- Covering Letter (Savills);
- Various drawings (AFL Architects);
    - WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20004-Site Location Plan-P03
    - WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20001-Academy Building Block 1 - Change Building Plans and Elevations-P07
    - WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20002-Proposed Site Plan-P10
    - WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20003-Academy Building Block 2 - Staff, Medical and Gym Block Plans & Elevations-P05
    - WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20005-Wrexham Academy - Site Plan-P02
    - WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20006-Wrexham Academy Blocks 1 & 2 Immediate Site Plan-P02
- Design and Access Statement (AFL Architects) (ref. 211516-AFL-ZZ-ZZ-RP-A-00001)
- Transport Note (Apex Transport Planning) (ref. C24132.TN01.Iss2)
- Drainage Report (WillisHazell) (ref. August 2024)

- Green Infrastructure Statement (Savills) (ref. August 2024)

1.3. Statement Structure

1.3.1. This Statement describes the development proposals, the planning policy framework, assesses the scheme's planning merits, and concludes about the planning implications of the proposals. In doing so, the Statement draws upon the other supporting documents (referenced above).

1.3.2. Collectively, the application and supporting documents explain and assess all aspects of the proposed development. They demonstrate that significant benefits will arise from the Academy Development, that in all respects the impacts of the proposals are acceptable and where necessary can be mitigated, and that the proposals should be granted planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

1.3.3. The remaining sections of this statement are structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** Provides a description of the Site, context and planning history;
- **Section 3:** Describes the proposals;
- **Section 4:** Identifies and summarises the most pertinent planning policy framework to the Site;
- **Section 5:** Undertakes an assessment of the proposals against the Development Plan;
- **Section 6:** Draws together a summary and conclusion.

2. Site Description & Context

2.1. Site Description and Context

2.1.1. The new Academy buildings are located at Darland High School on the south eastern part of the school close to the existing Scout building. The total Site covers an area of approximately 784 sqm, located entirely within the administrative area of WCBC.

2.1.2. The Site Location Plan (Ref. WRX-AFL-ZZ-DR-A-20004) with the Site edged in red is enclosed and identifies the likely extent of the proposed works. It consists of three separate parcels.

2.1.3. The Site is located immediately adjacent the settlement of Rossett.

2.1.4. The Site is located within the Green Wedge which has been designated between Rossett and Trevalyn under Policy SP6.

2.1.5. Immediately to the west of the Site is Darland High School, Darland Leisure and Activity Centre, and Rossett Badminton Club. To the south is a Scout building, with residential dwellings beyond there, and to the north are further residential dwellings. To the east is agricultural fields, with Gamford Lane beyond.

2.1.6. The Site is located in Flood Zone B according to NRW's Development Advice Map, which are areas known to have been flooded in the past, however where river or coastal flooding is considered to be less of an issue.

2.1.7. The Site itself has no known heritage assets or historic environment constraints. At a local level, the nearest listed buildings are Darland Hall (Grade II) and the Pergola and gazebo at Darland Hall (Grade II) approximately 360m to the north east, and the Canister Cottage (Grade II) approximately 360m south west of the Site. The Trevalyn Hall Registered Park And Garden is located approximately 1.3km south west.

2.1.8. There are no known Tree Preservation Orders across the Site.

2.1.9. The Site is not subject to any 'sensitive area' designations as set out within the 2017 Regulations[1].

2.2. Planning History

2.2.1. There is no known planning history on the Site.

[1] (Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017)

3. Proposals

3.1. Proposals Overview

3.1.1. The proposals consist of three buildings at Darland High School. The two new Academy buildings are located on the south eastern part of the school close to the existing Scout building. A further building is located south east of the playing fields for the grounds person to serve the pitches.

3.1.2. The two new Academy buildings are identical in size with a footprint of 345.6m² (albeit with differing internal layouts), each formed with 12 modules sized at 9.6m x 3m.

3.2. Block 1

3.2.1. Block 1 is located closest to the school and is situated north of the existing Scout hut.

3.2.2. It consists of changing rooms, and a small ancillary office and plant areas.

3.2.3. Block 1 is accessed from the southern side and has a fire escape on the north side. The new fences on the north and south sides provide a demarcation between the Academy and the school, gates are also provided to allow access between the two areas. Further south the existing fence and gate provide a boundary between the Academy and the public access to and from the east and west sides of the site.

3.3. Block 2

3.3.1. Block 2 is located further south on the eastern side of the existing Scout building.

3.3.2. It consists of, staff changing rooms, meeting rooms, a medical room, medical office, gymnasium, a classroom and ancillary office space

3.3.3. Block 2 sits in the existing compound which currently houses the existing Scout hut. Gates are provided to allow access to the new and existing buildings. New paths from the new building link into the existing path for the main entrance and fire escape further east. The existing path gives access to the playing fields.

3.4. Grounds Person Building

3.4.1. Further south east of Block 1 and 2 are facilities for the grounds person and will be accessed from Gamford Lane. This is made up of two shipping containers which will be used as a storage area to serve the pitches.

4. Planning Policy Overview

4.1. National Planning Policy

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.

4.1.1. The Welsh Government formally adopted "Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (Future Wales)" in August 2019 and has been updated in February 2021. Future Wales outlines the Welsh Government's strategies for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, delivering growth in the right areas, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of communities. Future Wales now forms part of the statutory development plan.

4.1.2. Future Wales sub-divides Wales into four regions with the application Site located within the North region. A total of 36 policies are contained within Future Wales of which 19 are thematic and the remainder relate to the four regions.

4.1.3. The following themes and pertinent policies are discussed below because they may be relevant to the determination of this planning application.

Location and Shape of Growth

4.1.4. Policy 1: Where Wales Will Grow identifies a series of National and Regional Growth Areas within which new development is generally to be focussed. One of the National Growth areas is Wrexham and Deeside, which includes the development Site.

4.1.5. Policy 2: Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration states that growth and regeneration of towns and cities should positively contribute towards building sustainable places that support active and healthy lives, with urban neighbourhoods that are compact and walkable, organised around mixed-use centres and public transport, and integrated with green infrastructure. It then goes on to identify seven key principles for placemaking:

- Creating a rich mix of uses;
- Providing a variety of housing types and tenures;
- Building places at a walkable scale, with homes, local facilities and public transport within walking distance of each other;
- Increasing population density, with development built at urban densities that can support public transport and local facilities;
- Establishing a permeable network of streets, with a hierarchy that informs the nature of development;

- Promoting a plot-based approach to development, which provides opportunities for the development of small plots, including for custom and self-builders, and;
- Integrating green infrastructure, informed by the planning authority's Green Infrastructure Assessment.

4.1.6. Policy 3 – Supporting Urban Growth and Regeneration – Public Sector Leadership notes that the Welsh Government will play an active role in supporting urban growth and regeneration. The public sector should show leadership and apply placemaking principles to ensure sustainable places.

4.1.7. Policy 12 – Regional Connectivity encourages a modal shift away from the private car by incorporating measures that encourage active travel and the use of public transport.

National Growth Area: Wrexham and Deeside

4.1.8. Policy 20 – National Growth Area – Wrexham and Deeside identifies that the area will be the main focus for growth and investment in the North Region. Wrexham and Deeside will be recognised as areas of focus for strategic economic and housing growth; essential services and facilities; advanced manufacturing and transport infrastructure.

4.2. Development Plan

4.2.1. The development plan relevant to the Site comprises:

- Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP) (2013-2028).

4.2.2. The development plan documents are discussed in turn below.

Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP) (2013-2028)

4.2.3. The Wrexham LDP was adopted by the Council on 20th December 2023 and covers the period 2013 to 2028. It forms part of the statutory development plan alongside Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.

4.2.4. Policy CF3 (Regional Sports Stadia) states that the continued use of a number of sports stadia, including the STōK Cae Ras (home of Wrexham Association Football Club), will be safeguarded. Further, the policy notes that any development which would result in the loss of principal use at the Site will not be permitted. Development proposals which enhance existing facilities at the named stadia, including the STōK Cae Ras, will be supported.

4.2.5. Policy SP6 (Green Wedge) notes that a green wedge has been designated between Rossett and Trevalyn. The intention of this is to ensure protection of the openness of the land in the current plan period.

4.2.6. Policy SP11 (Transport and Accessibility) seeks to ensure that Wrexham's transport network will be developed in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner.

4.2.7. Policy SP13 (Health and Wellbeing) states that all development should seek to reduce health inequalities and provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles and improving health and well-being, including mental health, by addressing the physical, economic and social determinants of health.

4.2.8. Policy SP16 (Minerals Supply and Safeguarding) outlines the approach to be taken to the safeguarding of important mineral resources within the County Borough, including maintaining a sustainable supply of minerals over the plan period.

4.3. Other Material Considerations

Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (February 2024)

4.3.1. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales

4.3.2. Paragraph 3.65 of PPW notes that green wedges are local designations which essentially have the same purpose as Green Belts. They may be used to provide a buffer between the settlement edge and statutory designations and safeguard important views into and out of the area. When considering applications for planning permission in Green Belts or green wedges, a presumption against inappropriate development will apply. Paragraph 3.75 confirms that the construction of new buildings for essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, and other uses of land which maintain the openness of the Green Belt or green wedge and which do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it, is not considered inappropriate development in the green wedge.

4.3.3. Chapter 5 of PPW ‘Productive and Enterprising Places’ states that we should be supporting and enabling training and education in order to support progress to a circular economy and create sustainable places.

5. Assessment

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. This section of the Planning Statement assesses the key planning considerations relevant to the, taking into account the policy framework, planning history and analysis within the suite of supporting application documents.

5.2. Principle of Development

5.2.1. The Site is located at Darland High School, which is already established as an educational facility. The proposed Academy buildings will enable the development and education of young athletes both on and off the pitch, and therefore represents a use which is considered entirely appropriate in this location and does not alter the existing use of the Site.

5.3. Land Use

5.3.1. The Site is identified in the adopted LDP as being within the green wedge between Rossett and Trevalyn, which is protected under Policy SP6. The intention of this is to ensure protection of the openness of the land in the current plan period. However, paragraph 3.75 of PPW confirms that the construction of new buildings for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, and other uses of land which maintain the openness of the green wedge and which do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it, is not considered to be inappropriate development in the green wedge. Nonetheless, the buildings are small and modest in size and therefore maintain the openness, with Building 1 located within the main campus of the school. Therefore, the development proposals are not considered to contradict LDP Policy SP6.

5.4. Heritage Impact

5.4.1. The Site itself has no known heritage assets or historic environment constraints within its red line boundary. Heritage assets have been identified in broad proximity to the Site and are discussed in the following sections. The nearest listed buildings include:

- Darland Hall (Grade II)
- Pergola and Gazebo at Darland Hall (Grade II)
- Canister Cottage (Grade II)

Listed Buildings

5.4.2. At a local level, the nearest listed buildings are Darland Hall (Grade II) and the Pergola and gazebo at Darland Hall (Grade II) approximately 360m to the north east, and the Canister Cottage (Grade II) approximately 360m south west of the Site beyond intervening development.

5.4.3. The proposed development is located within the school campus, and includes single storey buildings. Given this, and the above, it is clear that there are no heritage related concerns.

5.5. Flood Risk and Drainage

Flood Risk

5.5.1. The Site is located in Flood Zone B according to NRW's Development Advice Map, which are areas known to have been flooded in the past, however is considered to be suitable for most forms of development.

Drainage

5.5.2. For Block 1, the above ground rainwater roof drainage (RWP) will connect to underground drainage which carries surface water to a connection point with the surface water discharge from the adjacent Science Block, with this then being collected in an attenuation tank where the grey water is then used for toilet flushing within the Science Block. Any outfall from the Science Block attenuation is then directed into the drainage system.

5.5.3. For Block 2, the above ground RWP will connect to underground drainage that is fed into the nearby brook. This is considered acceptable as any risk of overflow is already managed by means of a high-level discharge drain that would take any excess water into the drainage system as a fail-safe mechanism.

Foul Drainage

5.5.4. In terms of foul drainage, the management varies slightly across the two buildings.

5.5.5. For Block 1, waste water is taken to an underground drainage system running down both sides of the building with chambers and inspection points as required. The drainage runs are taken to a chamber to the south-west of the building where it is connected to the school drainage system via a 150mm pipe, connection at a point with an invert level of 1800mm and a drain diameter of 450mm. The Youth Training Academy buildings and the school are expected to operate at different times, with the Academy facilities being operational outside school hours, and there is therefore no concern over potential capacity of the main drainage system.

5.5.6. For Block 2, foul arises from two changing rooms, a DDA compliant WC, a staff kitchenette area and an area for washing machine and cleaner's sink. All waste water is taken to an underground system into a pumping station where it is pumped to a chamber adjacent to the Changing Room building and falls through gravity into the mains drainage as indicated above.

5.6. Transport

5.6.1. The accompanying Transport Note (TN) provides a detailed assessment of the Academy operations, linked to its timetable of activities and the number of associated players/staff has been undertaken to

determine the potential trip generation and parking demand. It has been established that the number of movements are relatively small and predominantly occur outside of both the school operational hours and the network peak periods.

5.6.2. Similarly, parking demand occurs predominantly outside the school operating hours, when there is ample capacity to accommodate the anticipated demand.

5.7. Amenity

5.7.1. As outlined above, the Site is located at Darland High School, which is already established as an educational facility. The proposed Academy buildings will enable the development and education of young athletes both on and off the pitch, and therefore represents a use which is considered entirely appropriate in this location and does not alter the existing use of the Site. It is not anticipated that the development at the Site will impact upon the amenity of existing neighbouring properties.

5.8. Ecology

5.8.1. The Site does not contain or lie immediately adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory conservation designations. The closest is the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is located over 3km east of the Site on the Wales / England border.

5.8.2. Block 1 is located on an area of hardstanding, whilst Block 2 is located on an area which currently consists of long jump tracks and pits. The Grounds Person Building is located on an area which is regularly mown and therefore has little ecological value.

5.8.3. Given the above, it is not considered that the proposals will have a detrimental impact upon ecology in the area, and the development would not be unacceptably constrained by biodiversity and nature conservation issues.

5.9. Green Infrastructure

5.9.1. The accompanying Green Infrastructure Statement can be found at *Appendix A.*

6. Conclusion

6.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application on behalf of WAFC, for the development of a new Academy training facility at Darland High School. The proposals seek full planning permission for three buildings. The two new Academy buildings are located on the south eastern part of the school close to the existing Scout building. A further building is located south east of the playing fields for the grounds person to serve the pitches.

6.1.2. The delivery of a new Academy training facility at Darland High School is considered a key component in the Club gaining status as an EFL Category 3 Academy from the 2024/25 season, following a successful Full Audit Assessment. The training facility will be used by the WAFC Academy teams, from ages nine to 18. The proposed Academy buildings will enable the development and education of young athletes both on and off the pitch.

6.1.3. This Statement has summarised the conclusions of the supporting reports and therefore sets out the impacts of the proposals. These reports have set out the numerous benefits of the proposals and policy compliance.

6.1.4. This Statement has demonstrated the planning case in support of the proposals in the context of relevant national and local planning policy. It has also identified the significant benefits to both the, the Club and wider community as a result of the proposed development. It is therefore respectfully requested that the proposals are recommended for approval and planning permission granted.

Appendix A – Green Infrastructure Statement

Green Infrastructure Statement

August 2024

Darland High School
Chester Road
Rossett
Wrexham
LL12 0DL

Full Planning Permission for the Construction of Sports Academy Buildings

Introduction

This Green Infrastructure Statement ("GIS") has been prepared in response to the requirements of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024) ("PPW"). Updated policy within PPW includes the requirement for all planning applications to be accompanied by a proportionate GIS describing how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal and demonstrate how the 'step-wise approach' has been followed (Paragraph 6.4.21).

Site Description

The Site covers an area of approximately 0.78 ha (784 sqm) consisting of three buildings at Darland High School. Figure 1.1 below shows the location of the Site.



Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan

Block 1 is located on an area of hardstanding, with no existing vegetation. There is therefore no biodiversity or environmental quality within this area.

Block 2 is located on an area which currently consists of long jumps and frequently mown grass. The Grounds Person Building are located on an area of frequently mown grass. Both of these buildings are considered to have been placed on low value green infrastructure.

Proposed Development

This Application seeks to provide two new buildings to support the proposed Academy, which will include changing rooms as well as a small ancillary office, plant areas, meeting rooms, medical room, medical office, gymnasium, and a new classroom. A further building consisting of two shipping containers is proposed in the south east of the playing fields to serve the pitches.

An application is being submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council ("WCBC") as the Local Planning Authority ("LPA") for:

"Full Planning Permission for the Construction of Sports Academy Buildings"

Step-wise approach

PPW states that the GIS will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach has been applied.

The step-wise approach is ordered as per: (1) avoid; (2) minimise; (3) mitigate/restore; compensate on site (4); and (5) compensate off site.

(1) Avoid

In identifying the Site, the Applicant had regard to the nature of the Site as predominantly being hard standing, with the remaining low value green infrastructure. The Applicant has considered the constraints and opportunities for the Site, including but not limited to environmental considerations, such as the absence of any statutory environmental designations. As noted in the submitted Planning Statement (Savills, August 2024), the Proposed Development would not have any significant adverse effects on ecology or biodiversity.

(2) Minimise

Following the application of the avoidance principle (i.e. step (1)), the Applicant has sought to minimise impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems where they occur by maintaining the largest possible area of existing habitat. Whilst the Proposed Development will result in the removal of small patches of modified grassland (close mown), this has been minimised to that necessary to facilitate the Proposed Development.

(3) Mitigate/restore

It is considered that appropriate on-site mitigation measures are able to be adequately controlled via suitably worded conditions. These measures will avoid any negative effects of the Proposed Development where they occur.

(4) Compensate on site

On-site compensation is proposed to be dealt with via an appropriately worded condition with an appropriate trigger.

(5) Compensate off site

The Applicant is not proposing any compensation off-site, as compensation will be provided for on-site (in line with the priority noted within the step-wise approach).

Conclusion

This GIS has demonstrated the step-wise approach taken by the Applicant in refining the Proposed Development. It demonstrates the positive actions taken to avoid impacts to statutorily designated sites and all green infrastructure and minimise impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems by maintaining the largest possible area of existing habitat. The Proposed Development will result in the removal of small areas of modified grassland, however it is considered that mitigation measures can be adequately controlled via suitably worded conditions.

Overall, the Proposed Development will have no adverse impacts on ecology or biodiversity.