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Architecture + Building Surveying + Town Planning

P/2008/1296 S73 Application

Wrexham University Student Village

Planning Note

24th October 2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION 3

2.0 SITE BACKGROUND 4

3.0 PROPOSED VARIATION 7

4.0 HIGHWAYS 12

5.0 BIODIVERSITY 17

6.0 CONCLUSION 18

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Cassidy + Ashton have been instructed by Wrexham University to prepare and submit this Section 73 application (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) to vary 1no. planning condition attached to P/2008/1296.

1.2 The application relates to Wrexham Student Village, Wrexham University, Plas Coch Campus and is for the following:

> *Variation of condition 7 (student accommodation) of planning permission ref. P/2008/1296 to allow for occupation by non-students.*

1.3 This section 73 relates to application ref. **P/2008/1296** which was approved on 6th April 2009. The description of development as follows:

> *Erection of 521 student bedroom development/construction in two blocks, together with access road, parking and landscaping.*

1.4 Condition 7 of the above approval states:

> *"The development hereby approved shall only be used as student accommodation"*

1.5 The proposed variation to Condition 7 is to read as follows:

> *"The development hereby approved shall only be used as student accommodation,* ***with the exception of the period between 1 June and 15 September of any given year when the premises may also be occupied by non-students****"*

1.6 The proposed amendment to condition 7 would not have a material impact on the site/buildings as a whole or its principal use.

1.7 This Planning Note sets out the context of the proposed variation.

2.0 SITE BACKGROUND

SITE CONTEXT & BACKGROUND

2.1 The site is comprised of two student accommodation blocks located adjacent to the Racecourse Ground, Mold Road/Crispin Lane, Wrexham. The site is within Wrexham Town Centre bound by Crispin Lane to the east, Wrexham Racecourse Ground to the south and west, and University car parking to the north.

2.2 The site is sustainably located, with access to public transport connections and local amenities. Wrexham General Railway Station is less than 300m from the site providing frequent connections both regionally and nationally, including to Cardiff and Birmingham. The town centre amenities are sited approximately 600m away.

2.3 By the nature of the site as student accommodation, the majority of students leave the accommodation at the end of the academic year following examinations and final assessments in May. As a result, a significant proportion of the accommodation is vacant over the summer period, until University resumes in September. Students typically occupy the Universities' accommodation from around mid-September.

2.4 Wrexham University are committed to investing in the campus to develop an environment where students want to stay, building a student centred, vibrant and sustainable campus. 'Campus 2025' is the universities future strategy, which seeks to sustain its position in the higher education sector.

2.5 Aligned with this, the applicant wishes to make use of the otherwise vacant accommodation during the summer and assist the commercial viability of the site by allowing short-term lettings for non-students during the summer period, notably 1 June until 15 September of any given year.

2.6 For the avoidance of doubt, the primary use of the site will remain as student residential accommodation as permitted under the approved planning application P/2008/1296.

PLANNING HISTORY

2.7 There are a number of relevant planning applications related to the site. These are detailed below:

2.8 Application Ref. **P/2008/1295**

Outline application for 319 student bedroom development and access road, parking, landscaping and development of East stand/multi-function arena.

Approved 6 April 2009.

Reserved matters were never submitted to accord with this outline permission (which contained a condition requiring reserved matters to be submitted by 6 April 2012) and this permission has therefore lapsed.

2.9 Application Ref. **P/2008/1296**

Erection of 521 student bedroom development/construction in two blocks, together with access road, parking and landscaping.

This full application was approved 6 April 2009.

The permission was the basis to build the existing student accommodation which is now erected onsite.

2.10 The existing student accommodation provides 323 units across two blocks and is not the full 521 units originally envisaged.

OTHER RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

2.11 The below application at Snowdon Hall, Vicarage Hill, Wrexham, LL13 7HN is of wider relevance to the context of this S73 application.

2.12 Application ref. P/2024/0285 was approved on 13th August 2024 for a non-material amendment to planning permission ref. CBO1558.

The amendment included a condition as follows:

> *"The primary use of the premises is restricted to student accommodation only, with the exception of the period between 01 June and 31 August of any given year when the premises may be occupied by non-students."*

2.13 Whilst the above application is an example of a non-material amendment application, it outlines scope for student accommodation within Wrexham to be acceptable as visitor accommodation throughout the summer months, aligned with focus across Wrexham on improving opportunities for tourism.

3.0 PROPOSED VARIATION

3.1 This application seeks to vary **Condition 7** within the approved planning permission reference **P/2008/1296**.

3.2 The existing Condition 7 within approved planning application P/2008/1296 states that:

> *"The development hereby approved shall only be used as student accommodation"*

3.3 The proposed variation to Condition 7 is as follows:

> *"The development hereby approved shall only be used as student accommodation,* ***with the exception of the period between 1 June and 15 September of any given year when the premises may also be occupied by non-students****"*

3.4 This application proposes to vary the above planning condition to define the use of the site principally as student accommodation with flexibility for the summer holiday period to enable short-term lets for non-students. The proposed short-term lettings will be restricted to non-term time between 1 June and 15 September of any given year.

3.5 The proposed variation to this condition aims to add flexibility by allowing further use of the accommodation as non-student short-term lets, when not occupied by students, before the return of students for the new academic year.

3.6 The primary use of the site will not change, remaining as student accommodation. As such, the proposal would not materially change the way the site operates or functions as permitted under the existing planning permission.

3.7 The proposed ancillary use of the accommodation as non-student short-term lettings will not alter the characteristics of the site and will be supplementary to

its principal use. In addition, this ancillary use will be within periods where the student accommodation would be otherwise vacant.

3.8 The operation and servicing of the short-term lets will be managed directly by Wrexham University and will not be materially different to the operation and servicing of the student accommodation. Should any students remain on site over the summer months for any given reason, the non-student reservations would be managed accordingly so that students and non-students have distinct areas and are not sharing communal kitchen accommodation areas.

3.9 The management of non-student lets will be consistent with the existing student accommodation and ensure a safe and comfortable environment is maintained for all residents. Wrexham University remains open and managed throughout the summer months, and this extends to the accommodation block.

3.10 For the avoidance of doubt, there are no internal or external alterations proposed as part of this application and there will be no visual changes to the building/wider site in providing non-student short-term lets.

3.11 This proposal is within the parameters of the approved planning permission based on its primary use as student accommodation and the variation of the condition will accommodate the flexible supplementary use of the site as non-student short-term lets, when the accommodation would otherwise be vacant

PLANNING CONTEXT

3.12 The principle of short-term lettings over the summer period within the city centre should be reviewed against the relevant development plan and policy position of the local planning authority. The relevant development plan document comprises the Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013-2028, adopted in December 2023.

3.13 It is considered that the proposed variation to planning condition 7 for the flexibility of land use to include non-student short-term lettings during summer

holiday periods does not result in any policy conflicts and is supported by local policy. This is summarised below.

3.14 The following development plan policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

- Policy SP7: Wrexham City
- Policy SP8: Economic Growth, Employment and Enterprise
- Policy R1: Retail, Leisure and Commercial Centre Hierarchy

3.15 The site is not subject to any local plan allocations but is included within the Wrexham City Centre designation.

3.16 **Policy SP7** determines that Wrexham City as defined on the proposals map will be the focus for new development including housing, employment, commercial, retail, leisure, tourism, services, education, transport, infrastructure and the arts in order to strengthen the City's regional function as a settlement of national importance.

As the site is located within Wrexham City Centre, it is considered that the proposed variation will strengthen the city's tourism proposition by providing additional short-term lettings for visitors to stay in when they visit the city. In addition, the proposal makes use of accommodation which would otherwise be vacant during the summer months of June to mid-September, when visitation is likely to be at its peak.

3.17 **Policy SP8** states that to ensure the continued role of the County Borough as a key economic driver in North Wales and the wider region, the Plan will diversify the local economy and widen the economic base through a number of aims, including but not limited to:

- Maintaining and enhancing the County Borough's tourism, culture and leisure offer taking into account the unique character, local distinctiveness and heritage of the area and its context in the wider sub region.

The proposed variation supports this policy through contributing towards the County Borough's tourism offering. Additional short-term let accommodation within Wrexham ensures the city can accommodate visitors who are looking to explore the area and its wider region.

3.18 **Policy R1** determines that Retail, Leisure and Commercial proposals will be supported in accordance with the following hierarchy as identified on the proposals map.

Proposals will be supported where they are appropriate in scale for the particular centre.

Wrexham City Centre is the primary centre identified within the local plan for Retail, Leisure and Commercial proposals. Consequently, the proposal should be considered as supported as a commercial opportunity within the primary centre.

3.19 It is important to note that the proposed s73 application provides clear additional benefits to Wrexham City Centre which include:

- Increased economic activity for local businesses due to increased capacity for visitors to Wrexham City Centre.
- Continued support for accommodation staff and suppliers throughout the summer months where the site is currently vacant.
- Increased commercial viability for Wrexham University through provision of accommodation when the site would otherwise be vacant. This would result in further opportunity for reinvestment in the campus.
- Opportunities to support city wide events such as 2025 National Eisteddfod, through provision of accommodation for staff and visitors.

SUMMARY

3.20 This section 73 application is principally to vary Condition 7 within approved planning permission reference **P/2008/1296**. The amended planning condition aims to define the use of the site as student accommodation with flexibility to enable occupation by non-students during the summer holiday period of any given year.

3.21 The primary use of the site will not change, remaining as student accommodation. As such, the proposal would not materially change the way the site operates or functions as permitted under the existing planning permission.

3.22 It is considered that the proposal is supported within local policy as it will provide additional accommodation for visitors, supporting economic growth through tourism within Wrexham City Centre.

3.23 Consequently, it is considered that the proposed variation to planning condition 7 is entirely appropriate.

4.0 HIGHWAYS

INTRODUCTION

4.1 Within the existing planning permission (P/2008/1296), it is noted that the reason for the implementation of Condition 7, is the following:

> *"To control the level of traffic generation from the site and the demand for parking provision"*

4.2 Consequently, an assessment as to the impact of the proposed variation of Condition 7 on traffic generation and parking provision has been considered.

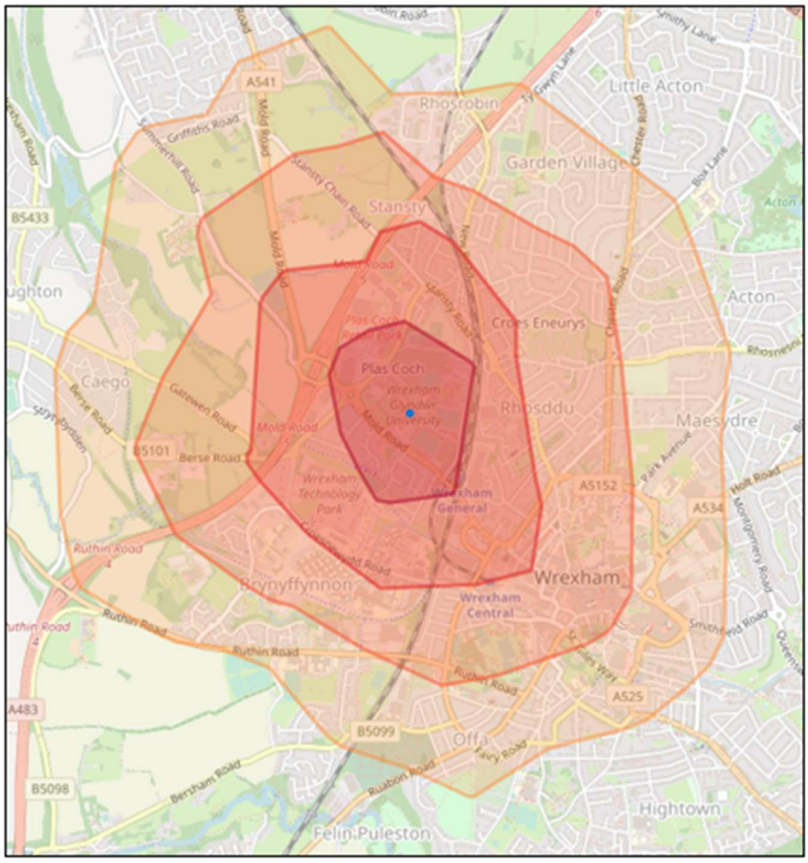
SUSTAINABLE LOCATION

4.3 The Planning Officer's Report of the original application (P/2008/1296) noted that the site is *"one of the most sustainable locations in Wrexham"* due to its links to the train station, bus routes and proximity to the town centre.

4.4 Visitors staying at the accommodation are expected to travel to and from the site by public transport, notably train and bus services which are located approximately 200m from site.

4.5 Throughout a visitors' stay, it is anticipated they will use sustainable modes of transport to explore the area. Curtins conducted a Transport Assessment in September 2023 which outlined the accessibility of the campus by sustainable modes of travel. This was submitted in regard to application ref. P/2023/0683.

4.6 The preferred maximum distance for sightseeing on foot is 2,000m (Charted Institution of Highways and Transportation), and within this distance visitors can access Wrexham City Centre and the rail station to explore further afield.



Areas Accessible within 2,000m walk of site

{source: Curtins Transport Assessment}

4.7 Additionally, Regent Street and Crispin Lane provide well-lit footpaths with controlled crossings for pedestrians to access the town centre. It is considered that the site is situated in a highly accessible area.

4.8 The nearest bus stops are located to the west and east of the existing Mold Road access entrance/exit within 250m walking distance of the site. These provide frequent access to Wrexham city centre.

4.9 The nearest rail station is Wrexham General, located a 600m walk from the centre of the site which provides access to locations within England and Wales.

4.10 Consequently, it is considered the site is accessible and sustainably located and any visitors staying within the accommodation can take advantage of existing public transport facilities which provide viable alternatives to private car.

CAR PARKING PROVISION

4.11 Whilst it is acknowledged the proposed variation to Condition 7 will result in vehicle traffic from some visitors, visitor traffic will only be on site from 1 June to 15 September during the proposed letting period to non-students.

4.12 During this period where non-students will occupy part of the site, the majority of students will vacate the accommodation units. As a result, there will be parking spaces available where students have left the accommodation for the summer months and the campus as a whole is much quieter. Consequently, there is not anticipated to be a significant increase in vehicle traffic to site as a result of the proposed variation.

4.13 The wider Plas Coch campus provides 943 free parking spaces, open to all staff, students and the general public.

4.14 A Car Park Management Plan (February 2024) has been produced by Curtins which concludes that there is an existing surplus of car parking at the campus for current demand. This was submitted in regard to application ref. P/2023/0903.

4.15 As part of the CPMP a 7-day automatic traffic count (ATC) was conducted and concluded that the maximum parking accumulation was 696 out of 943 spaces with 74% of the car parking occupied. This occurred on a day where the football stadium was in use and was considered to have affected the parking. The highest parking accumulation regularly throughout the weekdays was 56% occupancy with 529 spaces occupied out of the total 943 available spaces.

4.16 Consequently, whilst the proposed variation is not anticipated to result in a significant increase in car parking need, in addition to the parking spaces

available on the student accommodation site itself, there is capacity within the wider campus to accommodate additional vehicles should it be required.

PARKING MANAGEMENT

4.17 The wider campus is part of ongoing redevelopment which includes the demolition/development of various academic buildings, extension of student accommodation and sale of land to Edwards Homes for residential development.

4.18 These developments have been given consideration to the existing vehicle access strategy and parking provision. The CPMP confirms that redevelopment of the Campus will retain sufficient car parking spaces for staff and students and the proposed car parking will be managed through additional measures and parking controls.

4.19 A number of measures for parking provision have been identified and will ensure that the provision of parking will continue to accommodate the existing demand. The CPMP noted that due to the proximity to the city centre and rail station, Plas Coch Campus is regularly utilised by commuters.

4.20 The introduction of long-term permit and parking controls will be considered following the completion of Campus redevelopment works to allocate spaces for staff, students and visitors to the accommodation only, ensuring the provided spaces are used by those who require them.

4.21 In addition, a barrier has been implemented at the Plas Coch Road entrance of the campus to restrict access to users of the University only. The University are reviewing options for wider car parking control mechanisms across the campus.

SUMMARY

4.22 The proposed variation of Condition 7 does not impact the number of parking spaces available on the immediate site or wider campus.

4.23 Whilst there is not expected to be any increase in vehicle traffic due to the limitation of visitors to the summer months when there is low utilisation of the University facilities, the sustainable location of the site, the existing surplus of car parking and the introduction of car parking management systems will accommodate any vehicle traffic generated by visitors.

5.0 BIODIVERSITY

5.1 The existing planning permission to which this section 73 application relates (P/2008/1296) was approved prior to the requirement for biodiversity net benefit within the latest Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12).

5.2 In addition, the variation of Condition 7 does not result in a material change to the site or wider campus. The proposed variation does not require any changes to the built form or surrounding landscape therefore, it is considered that demonstration of biodviersity net benefit is not required as the site will remain as approved and there will be no change on existing baseline of biodiversity assets.

5.3 The proposed variation will have no material impact on the immediate site or wider campus consequently, there will be no loss of habitats or species and biodiversity and ecosystems will be maintained as is existing on the site.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The above statement details the proposed variation of Condition 7 related to approved planning permission **P/2008/1296** for Wrexham Student Village, Wrexham University, Plas Coch Campus, Wrexham.

6.2 Application ref. P/2008/1296 was approved with a series of conditions. This section 73 application is for the variation of condition 7 to expand on the use of the site and occupation by non-students during the summer months.

6.3 This section 73 application is submitted to vary Condition 7 to the following:

> *"The development hereby approved shall be occupied by students only,* ***with the exception of the period between 1 June and 15 September of any given year when the premises may also be occupied by non-students****"*

6.4 It is considered that the proposed condition variation is supported within the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan as detailed in the relevant policies above.

6.5 The proposed amendment to condition 7 would not have a material impact on the site/buildings as a whole or its principal use as student accommodation and will not change the way the site appears, operates or functions as permitted under the existing planning application P/2008/1296.

6.6 Additionally, there is sufficient parking capacity as the proposed variation will not significantly increase parking need across the site or wider campus.

6.7 Should the local authority wish to discuss the detail of the variation of the condition we would welcome the opportunity.

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