THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP



HYDRO ALUMINIUM

WREXHAM INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

STATEMENT OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Landscape Design has been produced by The Environment Partnership (TEP) Limited on behalf of Portal Construction NW Ltd to support the proposed development of a new aluminium processing warehouse at Hydro Aluminium located in Wrexham Industrial Estate (hereafter referred to as 'the site').

1.2 The Statement describes the principles which underpin the Landscape Masterplan (TEP ref: D9871.100) and provides a commentary on elements including mitigation as a result of site constraints and environmental issues.

1.3 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (TEP ref: 9871.002) and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (TEP ref: D9871.003).

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2.0 Site Appraisal

The site

2.1 The site is located on Bridge Road and bordered by Clywedog Road East within the Wrexham Industrial Estate, in the administrative area of Wrexham County Borough Council. The approximate central grid reference of the site is SJ 37557 49230.

2.2 The immediate area surrounding the site forms part of the Wrexham Industrial Estate and a residential estate lies to the south of Clywedog Road East. The wider landscape comprises agricultural land, and Wrexham City is located approximately 2km west of the site. The River Clywedog lies 650m east of the site at its nearest point, and Wrexham Road A534 is located approximately 2.5km north.

Site Appraisal

Planning Policy

2.3 The following planning policy has been reviewed as part of the landscape design process and to inform the proposals.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW)

2.4 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) delivers land use planning policy for Wales and provides a framework for the effective preparation of local planning authorities' development plans. This is supplemented by topic based Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

- Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning is a key TAN in relation to nature conservation and biodiversity.
- Technical Advice Note 12: Design is a key TAN in relation to promoting sustainability through good design.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Area Statements

2.5 NRW has developed seven Area Statements covering different areas of Wales. These statements are seen as a collaborative response to the Natural Resources Policy, published by the Welsh Government in 2017.

2.6 The following sections of the Area Statement relate to biodiversity and nature conservation in North East Wales:

- Climate emergency: resilience and adaptation.
- Develop and improve urban/rural green infrastructure.
- Promoting the resilience of ecosystems in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011

2.7 The Wrexham Unitary Development Plan was adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council on 14th February 2005. Relevant policies include:

a) Strategic policies:

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- Policy PS2: Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.
- Policy PS11: Encouragement will be given to proposals which improve the biodiversity value of sites and to the establishment of local nature reserves where the nature conservation and landscape interest of the land will be protected and enhanced.

b) Specific policies:

- Policy GDP1: Development Objectives
- Policy EC4: Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland
- Policy EC6: Biodiversity Conservation
- Policy EC17: Pentre Maelor - Land at Clywedog Road (East), Wrexham Industrial Estate will be safeguarded as a landscape buffer zone to remain free of built development.

Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) 2013 – 2028

2.8 The Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) is a long-term land use and development strategy focused on achieving sustainable development. The LDP2 is currently being prepared by Wrexham County Borough Council and will replace the current adopted UDP when adopted.

Local Planning Guidance Notes

2.9 Wrexham County Borough Council has approved a series of local planning guidance notes to support the WUDP. Relevant guidance notes include:

- LPGN 07: Landscape and Development
- LPGN 17: Trees and Development
- LPGN 24: Designing Out Crime
- LPGN 26: Landscape and Industrial Development
- LPGN 29: Employment Development and Nature Conservation
- LPGN 32: Biodiversity and Development

<u>Landscape Character</u>

2.10 Wrexham Industrial Estate falls within the National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) 13: Deeside and Wrexham.

2.11 Locally the site falls within the Wrexham LANDMAP Landscape Character Area 11: Wrexham Industrial Estate. The overall management strategy for this LCA is sustainable development and enhancement. Relevant management aims and guidelines include:

Aim: Enhance setting of estate and mitigate visual impact on wider surroundings.

- *Develop as industrial estate in semi-natural setting.*
- *Refer to latest Landscape and Environmental Study (April 2005) of estate for guidance on improvement of visual and environmental coherence.*
- *Retain or provide landscape buffer between estate and farmland.*

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- *Retain or provide landscape buffer between industry and residential buildings.*
- *Refer to WCBC Landscape & Industrial Development Local Planning Guidance Note No. 26.*
- *Refer to Green Network Strategy due March 2007.*

Aim: Minimise impact of development on areas of high biodiversity value.

- *Refer to Derelict and Industrial Land Habitat Action Plan (part of Wrexham Biodiversity Action Plan) and maintain biodiversity interest in areas of unused or derelict land.*
- *Develop green network strategy to retain and link areas of valuable open space.*
- *Plant native trees and maintain mature and veteran trees.*
- *Protect species: grizzled skipper, newts, bats and birds.*
- *Manage road verges and grasslands as hay meadows subject to highway restrictions.*

Existing Vegetation

2.12 Ancient semi-natural woodland is present offsite adjacent to the northern boundary (Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)).

2.13 The plantation broad-leaved woodland within the site provides connectivity through Wrexham Industrial Estate and to the wider landscape via the offsite ancient woodland corridor and offsite brook to the north.

2.14 The North Wales Wildlife Trust publication 'Wrexham Industrial Estate – Towards a Living Landscape' has been reviewed as part of the design process to understand the ecological context of the site and surrounds. The existing woodland and grassland within the site has been identified for improved management. Scarification is recommended within the site to improve habitats for the Grizzled Skipper butterfly (listed on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as a Species of Principal Importance (SPI)).

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3.0 Aims and Objectives

3.1 The landscape proposals have been prepared in response to the existing and surrounding landscape features. The landscape proposals are detailed on the Landscape Masterplan drawing (TEP ref: D9871.100).

3.2 The key aim of the landscape is to minimise the visual effects of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape whilst providing a naturalistic setting and screening to the development through strengthening the existing green infrastructure.

3.3 This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Provide a landscape framework for the proposed development that is both appropriate to the immediate area and contributes to the landscape in the wider area;
- Sensitively integrate the development into the existing landscape character through creation of a high-quality landscaping scheme;
- Mitigate for the loss of tree and scrub cover associated with the proposed scheme through replacement planting and enhancement of existing grassland;
- Where possible, retention, protection, and enhancement of existing vegetation that is ecologically or visually important to continue to screen views from Clywedog Road East and Bridge Road;
- Enhance biodiversity through the inclusion of new habitats within the site to bolster existing wildlife corridors;
- Retain and reuse existing site won soils wherever possible;
- Utilise, where appropriate, plant species that are of local provenance that provide suitable all-year screening; and
- Consider climate resilience and future maintenance requirements through the careful selection of plant species, with an emphasis on achieving good establishment whilst minimising maintenance requirements.

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4.0 Design Principles

4.1 The following paragraphs provide a description of the landscape proposals and should be read in conjunction with the Landscape Masterplan (drawing ref: D9871.100).

Existing vegetation

4.2 Existing vegetation to the site boundaries, including trees, scrub, and grassland will be retained and enhanced where possible to maintain their function as part of the wider green infrastructure of Wrexham Industrial Estate, and to continue to provide a screening function to the site.

4.3 Retained tree groups are illustrated in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (TEP ref: D9871.001) and will be protected during construction.

4.4 Additional planting is proposed to bolster existing screening of the site and mitigate loss of habitat.

Soft landscape features

4.5 Proposals relating to the detailed planting and seeding across site are described in the following paragraphs and are illustrated on the Detailed Planting Plan (TEP ref: D9871.101). The proposed planting comprises:

- Native tree planting;
- Native woodland edge planting;
- Native broad hedgerow planting; and
- Grassland seeding.

<u>Native Tree Planting</u>

4.6 Groups of individual trees will be planted throughout the western landscape buffer to provide a transition from the woodland structure belt and to break up expanses of grassland. Tree planting will mainly comprise native species that will offer biodiversity benefits to the scheme and accentuate certain areas, providing further visual interest

4.7 Proposed native species could include:

- Acer campestre (Field Maple)
- Alnus glutinosa (Alder)
- Betula pendula (Silver Birch)
- Populus nigra (Black Poplar) – LBAP species.
- Quercus robur (Pedunculate Oak)
- Salix caprea (Goat Willow)
- Salix fragilis (Crack willow)

4.8 It is proposed that individual trees will have a minimum girth of 16-18cm and will be planted with irrigation pipes, short double timber stakes and have a 1.2m diameter bark mulch ring (at a minimum 75mm depth).

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Native woodland edge planting

4.9 Pockets of woodland edge planting are proposed to the northern edge of the existing woodland belt along Clywedog Road East (i.e. southern boundary), to replace scrub lost to development, and to provide a transition to retained vegetation and enhance wildlife connectivity. The chosen species will provide variation through seasonal colour and are particularly beneficial as a food source for wildlife. The proposed mix is as noted in the LPGN 29 - Appendix 6:

- Corylus avellana (Hazel)
- Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)
- Ilex aquifolium (Holly)
- Malus sylvestris
- Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)
- Rosa canina (Dog Rose)
- Salix cinerea (Grey Willow)
- Sambucus nigra (Elder)
- Viburnum opulus (Guelder Rose)

4.10 The woodland edge mix will comprise entirely of transplants/whips (60-80cm, bareroot/container), planted at 1.5m centres in single species groups of 10-25nr.

Native broad hedgerow planting

4.11 A broad hedgerow is proposed along the north western boundary with the ancient woodland, to enhance wildlife connectivity and provide a suitable transition.

4.12 Proposed native species comprise:

- Corylus avellana (Hazel)
- Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)
- Ilex aquifolium (Holly)
- Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)
- Rosa canina (Dog Rose)
- Sambucus nigra (Elder)
- Salix cinerea (Grey Willow)
- Viburnum opulus (Guelder Rose)

4.13 The native broad hedgerow will be planted in groups of 5-20nr, at 10/lin m in two staggered rows (i.e. 4 rows).

Grassland areas

4.14 The remaining areas will be seeded with grass. A wildflower enriched amenity grass seed will be sown to the edges of hardstanding including roads and the existing access track off Bridge Road to minimise growth and cutting operations and to provide a neat edge. Under trees and in particularly shady areas, a shade tolerant mix will be sown to ensure establishment.

4.15 Native species-rich meadow grasses will be sown in parts of the open spaces along the western and northern wildlife corridors.

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4.16 Where ground is reprofiled, areas will be prepared and seeded with a seed mix (70% grass:30% wildflower) designed to maximise the opportunity for wildflower establishment and to maximise biodiversity.

4.17 In locations marked for species-rich meadow, but where the existing ground is not required to be altered to facilitate the development, the existing grassland will be scarified to create areas of bare soil that will be overseeded with a 100% wildflower version of the meadow mix to enhance species diversity.

4.18 In addition, pockets of bare ground will be created and retained to provide suitable habitat for the Grizzled Skipper butterfly (listed on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016).

4.19 The species-rich meadow grassland will require less frequent cutting, and will provide good habitat for insects, small mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles, providing nesting sites during spring, food during summer and autumn, and shelter during winter.

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5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The landscape proposals presented in this report, and associated drawings, sensitively integrate the new development into the surrounding area and are appropriate to creating an enhanced landscape setting for the development.

5.2 The scheme will provide long-term screening of the development from nearby receptors and will enhance the biodiversity of the site.

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