

Design and Access Statement And Planning Statement

Proposed change of use and subdivision of existing retail space to create a new Leisure units within Eagles Meadow Shopping Centre, Wrexham.



February 2023

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1.0 Introduction

Covell Matthews Architects has been instructed by Wrexham Shopping Mall Ltd. (the Applicant) to provide architectural and town planning advice regarding the proposed change of use and sub-division of the large retail Unit A1 (formally the Debenhams department store) and adjacent vacant unit B8 at the Eagles Meadow Shopping Centre within Wrexham city centre and the redevelopment into new D2 leisure units.

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for Change of Use which has been submitted to the Wrexham County Borough Council.

2.0 Background and Reason for Application

In terms of Wrexham County Borough Council Planning Policy, Eagles Meadow Shopping Centre is regarded as a primary shopping street.

Unit A1, was designed as an anchor retail unit and was occupied by Debenhams since the centre opened in 2008 until the collapse of the retailer in 2021.

The unit is a major unit and represents approximately 32% of the retail floor space of Eagles Meadow. However, since the Debenhams unit became vacant in May 2021 it has remained empty. The empty unit has been actively marketed for retail use by international real estate company Savills but this has generated no interest from retail tenants. Over the years other major retail names such as M&S, Top Shop, Carphone Warehouse and H&M have all left Wrexham city centre. Over this period footfall has declined by 40%.

With recent negative impacts of “bricks and mortar” retailing a new emphasis has been placed on attracting recreation and leisure tenants with some progress being made. This type of use is complementary to other retail uses as it is a good footfall driver providing an alternate reason to visit a shopping centre, or high street, and thereby offering opportunities to visit other retailers. The most recent tenant interest is from a children’s trampoline centre who would be keen to take occupation of the first floor of the Debenhams unit and the adjacent vacant unit B8. The new use will create new employment and will be complimentary to the other leisure units at the centre.

Eagles Meadow already has leisure uses (Odeon, Tenpin bowling, Nando’s) The vacant Debenhams store has large floorplates which lend themselves well to further leisure operators and these uses sit well with the existing leisure tenants within Eagles Meadow. The shopping centre has cleaning and security staff who are already very experienced in dealing with leisure users and customers and together with the on-site management team will ensure good estate management going forward.

We are seeking an open D2 use, for the whole of Unit A1 and the adjacent Unit B8, which is vacant, but already has consent for restaurant use.

The aim is for the unit to become a site that will not only compliment the main retail function of the centre, but also boost and reinforcing this end of Eagles Meadows as a destination leisure zone.

3.0 Existing Site Photographs



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3 – Zetland Street, as existing



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

4.0 Amount of Development

No additional floor area is proposed.

The proposal is for a change of use from Retail to Leisure use (D2). This project promotes sustainability by reusing existing building and infrastructure, aligning with Wrexham's urban regeneration and decarbonisation goals.

5.0 Layout

The proposed development will take place within part of the retail space formerly occupied by Debenhams, a large retail unit within the shopping centre.

The existing unit will be subdivided horizontally with both ground floor and first floors becoming separate leisure units.

6.0 Appearance

The units will remain largely unchanged, with the exception of a new entrance to be formed onto the existing balcony. This will not be the main entry point but a secondary entrance to the ancillary food and beverage section which is the same footprint as the former Debenhams café. Two of the existing sections of shopfront looking onto the central public area are to be replaced with new double glazed doors. These will be designed to co-ordinate with the existing glazing bars and match the existing materials.

Existing Signage zones are to be retained and reused by future tenants.

Advertisement Consents to be the subject of separate applications.

7.0 Highways Statement, Servicing and Accessibility

Car Parking

The leisure units are to be served by the existing centre car park.

Servicing, Recycling and Refuse

The leisure units are to be served by the existing centre servicing and recycling arrangements.

Public Transport Links

Being situated in the town centre the site is served extremely well by Public Transport.

- By Train, Eagles Meadow is only a 10 minute walk from Wrexham General and Wrexham Central train stations.
- By Bus, buses stop at Smithfield Road and Salop Road, right next to Eagles Meadow.
- By Car, Eagles Meadow provides 970 safe and secure covered parking spaces.
- By Foot, Eagles Meadow is a short 5 minute walk from Wrexham High Street; the main pedestrian entrance is on Yorke Street.

8.0 Conclusion

The project represents an excellent opportunity to introduce a complementary leisure use within Eagles Meadow Shopping Centre where there are already leisure operators, which we hope will help to generate greater footfall and thereby sustain the shopping and leisure environment within the centre and the city centre as a whole.

We consider the development does achieve urban regeneration, adapting the shopping centre to changing retail conditions. The use will also support new employment in the city.

The use has respect for the setting, is highly sustainable, reusing an existing building and infrastructure.

Positive meetings have been held regarding these proposals with Wrexham County Borough Council, the MP and MS.

We therefore submit this application with confidence that it meets all relevant requirements and respectfully ask that you support this application.

END