



FAW Colliers Park, Wrexham Response to Comments
P/2022/0660

P/2022/0660: FAW Response to Comments Raised

Introduction

1. This report from the FAW has been prepared in response to the comments on the above application. It seeks to address all of the concerns that have been raised as well as cross referencing what are important forerunning planning decisions relevant to this case.
2. The FAW's application is seeking to remove the condition which specifies the type of football activities and currently states that the site shall only be used as an association football training ground and sports education facility and for no other purposes. The current planning condition has recently been interpreted as not allowing any form of competitive games or matches to be played which significantly restricts the ability of the FAW and Wrexham Glyndwr University, the Freeholder, to secure beneficial use of the Centre.
3. In summary the FAW's objective in submitting this application is to have the restriction that is being interpreted as meaning no matches, to be removed so as to simply allow football and education activity, with the 200 people restriction being sufficient to avoid local disruption.
4. Furthermore, any restrictive definitions that attempt to describe what is, and is not allowed, only cause further interpretation challenges. As concluded by the Welsh Office Planning Inspector (Para 16 below) the 'introduction of any specific wording that would present problems of enforcement or onerous restrictions on types of players should be avoided'.
5. Finally, as a National Centre the investment in the centre has been to create a facility which is fit for national youth squads particularly for the age groups; for women's football development; and for national and regional coach education. It is not designed as a mass participation centre catering for large visitor numbers of players.

Background

6. The FAW is the Head Leaseholder for the Colliers Park National Training Centre.
7. The site was originally purchased and developed as a Training Ground by Wrexham AFC, after planning permission was granted in 1993 for it be used as a football



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training facility with restricted numbers on site and no competitive matches.

8. In more recent years, it was purchased by Wrexham Glyndwr University (the current Freeholder) to support its sports education and student sport experience.
9. In March 2018, the FAW entered into a partnership with the Freeholder Wrexham Glyndwr University to refurbish and upgrade the facilities to provide a prestigious facility for both partners as well as the Wrexham area and local community.
10. As a football training and development centre, football development activity has to include playing games /matches - one team against another – that is the nature of sport and its development. However, the facility was never intended to be used for any commercial/paying or senior men's league matches – that is not its purpose. The FAW uses appropriate stadia grounds for matches that need sufficient spectator accommodation. The priority use of the site is mainly for young people i.e. age group squads and teams and women and girls as well as for coach education courses.
11. In 2019 planning permission was sought and approved to make alterations and extend the existing facility to create the national football development and education centre. This embraced replacement pitches and floodlighting, associated external works and store and containers. The approved designs also included provision for small spectator stands serving the number one grass pitch and 3G pitch as well as match officials changing and car parking for 84 and 2 coaches with turning space.

Background to the Current Planning Consent

12. The application process included extensive consultation with the local community, Community Council and Planning Officer, with the latter advising that 'any former concerns and interpretations relating to competitive matches was open to interpretation but was considered to be more aligned to formal competition games for commercial gain.'
13. The Planning Officer went on to advise that development matches between countries for instance would not be subject to this restriction as these are an essential part of the development process.
14. For these reasons the hosting of age group matches was not considered an issue as the FAW believed that the anticipated activity at the National Development Centre



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would not fall outside of the understood parameters i.e. football training and development involving playing football games with the main use for development games for young people/girls, student sport and national age group squads.

15. The restriction of numbers of people on site (200) was also considered to be the critical requirement to restrict how the site was used and its impact.
16. **It is noteworthy that the 2018 planning advice to the FAW was backed up/informed by a Welsh Office Inspectorate Appeal decision from 1999.**
17. On that occasion Wrexham AFC's refused planning application to the Council, to amend conditions to allow spectator/competitive matches, was overturned by the Welsh Office Planning Inspectorate. The Inspector's report stated that there was no evidence that any games resulted in increased traffic but instructed that car parking should be increased to 58. He noted the mature trees and hedgerows around the site disguised the physical infrastructure and would not have a harmful effect on the open character and appearance of the green barrier nor would it have a harmful effect on the safety and free flow of traffic on Chester Road. As numbers on site are restricted, he concluded that the noise generated will not be significantly greater than that made by players and coaches alone. He also determined to avoid introducing any specific wording that would present problems of enforcement or onerous restrictions on types of players.
18. Thereafter WAFC used the site for age group/academy fixtures with teams visiting from other clubs in the league.
19. **In conclusion the Inspector allowed the appeal by omitting condition 10 not restricting spectators/competitions from the new approval. Clause ten was removed, accepting that competitive matches could be played. But the site was subjected to a capacity limit. The inspector agreed that stands should be subject to a further application.**
20. **The FAW therefore inherited the extant usage consent whilst also securing consent to erect small stands. It is only making this application in order to eliminate incorrect interpretations and misunderstandings which threaten the effective and intended use of the site.**

Specific Comments and Going Forward



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21. Colliers Park is attractive and well-loved facility. It is in a beautiful setting and the FAW recognises the special importance of the area. It is very proud of Colliers Park.
22. The critical principle is that there must be restricted numbers on site and controlled vehicular movements. The 200-person limitation is therefore the only important requirement, as the type of football activity whether coaching, children and young people playing or two teams competing make no difference to the noise or impact of the activity.

Use of the Site

23. The following schedule covers the proposed future use of the site in terms of matches and how FAW can control activity.
24. FAW would not wish to, hasn't, wouldn't and couldn't use Colliers Park as 'formal league venue for a senior club' which would bring large spectator numbers.
25. The football stadium off Clappers Lane is the main competition venue in the area and much closer to the heart of the Gresford community and local residents. Here Tier 2 Men's football fixtures are regularly played attracting a wide range of local and visiting supporters.
26. The priority use of the site is for training and coach education and the following schedule is indicative of what this would typically include:

a. Internal use

i. International squads (Only U15/U16/U17 Male and Female)

1. Matches behind closed doors for Wales teams that might attract an interest from scouts.
2. Teams to arrive by coach
3. No other activity on site at the same time.
4. If hosting a tournament in North Wales a game not involving Wales (for example Gibraltar U15 v Malta U15 – but only if low numbers expected) with teams competing at local stadia
5. Teams to arrive by coach
6. No other activity on site
7. Very low spectator numbers with a prior risk assessment against profile of teams, age grade etc. informing decisions to manage numbers on site



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b. External use

i. Wednesdays (alternate dates)

1. Wrexham Youth games (Daytime use)
2. Very low spectator numbers expected (Wrexham AFC fans/Club Officials in attendance).
3. We can control what other bookings we have on site at the same time. This allows us to manage spectator and car parking.
4. Home team/officials would arrive in cars
5. Away team in a coach/bus.
6. University (BUCSs) Fixtures (Daytime use)
7. Very low spectator numbers
8. Home team/officials arrived in cars. Away team in a coach/bus
9. Maximum of 5/6 homes game per season

c. Fridays (alternate dates).

- i. Women and Girls - Wrexham AFC U19s and Northop Hall U19s
- ii. We would not host any other bookings if these fixtures were taking place at site.
- iii. Home and away teams/Officials would be expected to arrive in cars

d. Sundays

- i. FAW North Academy Girls games
- ii. Parents attending matches but in low numbers, managed by FAW staff who can control arrival times and numbers of cars attending site.
- iii. We would not host any other bookings if these fixtures were taking place.

Car Parking and Vehicle Management

27. The Council officers have noted that the parking provision for 84 plus 2 coaches and turning is likely to be adequate for the limited usage numbers.

28. The FAW is not proposing developments that increase permitted vehicle movements.

29. An FAW car parking management plan will be updated to ensure adequate parking provided and managed on site.



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30. The car parking management plan will ensure that the coach parking is available when needed
31. Information about parking will be displayed on the website including a statement that no vehicles associated with the Centre shall park on adjoining highway
32. FAW is also mindful that it was advised that improvements to the visibility splays were to be avoided as planning officers did not wish to see hedgerows and boundary trees damaged whereby their amenity value or visual protection of the site is harmed.

Noise

33. The 2019 planning assessment noted that the building is very well screened behind a bank of trees forming the south and east boundary of the site and creating a mature and safe landscape feature
34. The nearest noise sensitive premises are the Care Home and Beeches. Both are well shielded by mature trees and hedgerows as well as a noise bund at the interface with the Beeches accommodation. The Care Home residency is some distance from the Centre and well shielded from the road.
35. **It should be noted that the FAW has never received any complaints from the nearby Beeches or Care Home or residents re noise from the football activities on site.** Any football related noise experienced by residents is likely to be from senior men's team fixtures held at Clappers Lane.

Finally

36. Colliers Park is a high profile and important facility serving both regional and national football development as well as educational objectives. Whilst FAW is mindful of the need to maximise the success of Colliers Park it would wish to do this alongside having due regard to the neighbouring businesses and local community. The FAW is happy to look at ways of improving the sharing of information about future plans and opportunities as well as responding to views from the community.

FAW

13/10/22