



PLANNING STATEMENT

Urban Vision Ltd on behalf of Robinwood Activity Centres Ltd

Change of use of the existing Cross Lanes Country Hotel and 'The Lodge' dwelling from C1 Use Class hotel and C3 Use Class dwellinghouse to C2 Use Class Children's Activity Centre to include extension to existing hotel building, the erection of buildings and equipment for children's activities with associated car parking, coach parking, landscaping and railings

The Former Cross Lanes Country Hotel, Bangor Road, Marchwiel, Wrexham, LL13 0TF

October 2016

1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared and submitted by Urban Vision Ltd on behalf of Robinwood Activity Centres Ltd. It forms part of a suite of documents in support of an application which seeks 'full' planning permission for the change of use of the existing Cross Lanes Country Hotel from C1 Use Class hotel to C2 Use Class Children's Activity Centre to include extension to existing hotel building, the erection of buildings and equipment for children's activities with associated car parking, coach parking, landscaping and railings.

1.2 The application submission comprises of the following:

- This Planning Statement;
- Pre-Application Consultation Report;
- Design & Access Statement;
- Ecological Appraisal;
- Tree Constraints Data;
- Marketing and Viability Report;
- Planning application forms and certificates; and
- Architectural plans & drawings:
 - 15-077-L01 Location Plan;
 - 15-077-E01 Existing Site Plan;
 - 15-077-E02 Existing Site Sections;
 - 15-077-E03 Existing Site Views;
 - 15-077-E04 Existing Hotel Ground Floor Plan;
 - 15-077-E05 Existing Hotel First Floor Plan;
 - 15-077-E06 Existing Hotel Elevations;
 - 15-077-E07 Existing Garage Plan and Elevations;
 - 15-077-P01 Proposed Site Sections;
 - 15-077-P02 Proposed Hotel Ground Floor Plan;
 - 15-077-P03 Proposed Hotel First Floor Plan;
 - 15-077-P04 Proposed Hotel Elevations;
 - 15-077-P05 Proposed Hotel Elevations;
 - 15-077-P06 Proposed Garage Floor Plan and Elevations;
 - 15-077-P07 Proposed Showers and Watersport Changing Floor Plan;
 - 15-077-P08 Proposed Showers and Watersport Changing Elevations;
 - 15-077-P09 Proposed Archery and Caving Floor Plan;
 - 15-077-P10 Proposed Archery and Caving Elevations;
 - 15-077-P11 Proposed High Activities Centre Floor Plans;
 - 15-077-P12 Proposed High Activities Centre Elevations;
 - 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-101 General Arrangement
 - 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-102 Car Park
 - 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-103 Tree Removal
 - 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-104.1 Planting Plan

- 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-104.2 Planting Plan
- 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-105 Proposed Levels
- 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-106 Proposed Fencing Layout
- 007502-UV-EW-XX-DR-L-107 Sections
- UV007502.108 Surfaces Planting Palette ; and
- 2016 00318 SU1 01 Topographical Survey.

2. Description of site and surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located within the hamlet of Cross Lanes, to the south-east of Marchwiel, in the county borough of Wrexham. The 3.83 hectares site houses the former Cross Lanes hotel, 'The Lodge' residential dwelling and a number of outbuildings all set within extensive grounds.
- 2.2 The hotel building has 16-bedrooms, a 45-cover restaurant area, a lounge bar and function room areas. The hotel is a traditional Victorian detached property, dating back to around 1870. It is of traditional construction and under a tiled roof with extensions to the rear. Extensive hardstanding used for car parking is provided to the front of the property.
- 2.3 'The Lodge' is a four-bedroom detached residential dwelling that is located to the east of the hotel building. It has its own garden area to its south and a large double garage unit to its east.
- 2.4 Aside from the double garage block other out buildings within the site include a single-storey timber stable block, a tall steel framed hay barn, two wood cabins and other smaller units typically used for storage.
- 2.5 The application site is well treed, particularly within the hotel grounds to the south of the hotel building where a large number of mature trees provide an attractive landscape.
- 2.6 Two vehicular accesses serve the site. The primary access is to Bangor Road with a secondary access provided to Kiln Lane. Both accesses distinguish within the car parking area to the front of the hotel building.
- 2.7 Bangor Road bounds the site to the north with agricultural land to beyond. Further agricultural land also bounds the site to the south and west. One large residential property is also located adjacent to the site to the west. Kiln Lane and 3 residential properties bound the site to the east.
- 2.8 The application site is currently within C1 Hotel Use Class and C3 Dwellinghouse Use Class.

Planning History

- 2.9 Two planning applications have been submitted at the site which are considered of relevance to the determination of this application now submitted:
- P/2012/0189 dated 14/03/2012 - Erection Of Bedroom Block, Internal Alterations And Extensions And Construction Of Car Park (Renewal Of Application Previously Granted Under Code No P/2006/1333); and
 - P/2010/0171 dated 08/03/2010 - Variation Of Condition 2 And 8 Of Planning Permission P/2006/1333 To Allow 'phase One' Construction Without Starting Work On 'phase Two' Construction.

Pre-Application Consultation

- 2.10 As of the 1st August 2016, the requirement to undertake pre-application consultation is applicable to all 'major' planning applications and applications for Developments of National Significance (DNS). Robinwood have

appropriately undertaken this process and the methodology and outcomes are reported within the submitted Pre-Application Consultation Report. A wealth of pre-application discussion was also undertaken with Wrexham County Borough Council Planning Officers and relevant statutory consultees.

3. Proposed development

- 3.1 The proposed development seeks to retain the former hotel building and formally change its use as a hotel (C1 Use Class) to a children's activity centre (C2 Use Class). The building will be used as accommodation, dining and living space, some indoor activities and general meeting rooms. There will be minor internal changes to the buildings to accommodate new activities. A two-storey extension is also proposed to the western elevation of the hotel. This is similar to (but smaller than) the extension that was previously approved under application reference P/2012/0189 (which remains extant) as discussed in the preceding chapter. The extension will comprise of dormitory rooms for the children.
- 3.2 The existing 4-bedroom dwelling on the site (The Lodge) will be converted into staff and administrative space for the children's activity centre. Only internal changes to the building are required to facilitate this.
- 3.3 External to the main activity centre building, several changes are proposed, some of which will require planning consent. These are briefly as follows:
- A building for high indoor activities; Climbing, Trapeze (Leap of Faith) and Crate Challenge;
 - A building for Archery and Caving;
 - A building for a changing and a shower room block for children taking part in raft building;
 - A Zip wire;
 - A Giant swing;
 - A High ropes course; and
 - A lake for canoeing and raft building.
- 3.4 In addition, there are other external activities which involve little construction or development and are not considered to require planning consent:
- Night Line - a trail on which children wearing blind folds follow a rope around a course; and
 - Quest - a generally outdoor themed problem solving area.
- 3.5 Further details of each individual element of the proposed development are provided within the submitted Design & Access Statement.
- 3.6 With regard to the actual use of the site the centre will operate with 13 groups with around 11 children in each. All children will be of primary school age.
- 3.7 Details of the design evolution of the scheme and how it has responded to lengthy pre-application discussions with the Council is provided within the submitted Design & Access Statement.

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1 This section identifies the planning policy framework, comprising national and local policies, which the proposals must be assessed against. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) require applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The adopted statutory development plan for Wrexham County Borough Council presently comprises:
- Wrexham Unitary Development Plan - adopted in February 2005.
- 4.3 In addition to the statutory development plan, the following documents should be given appropriate weight in the planning assessment:
- Planning Policy Wales (PPW, Ed. 8, January 2016);
 - Technical Advice Notes (TANs);
 - Wales Spatial Plan Update (2008);
 - Supplementary Planning Guidance documents (SPGs) prepared by Wrexham County Borough Council to expand upon existing local planning policies; and
 - Emerging Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) 2013 to 2028 and associated evidence base.
- 4.4 Current timeframes suggest that The Council will formerly submit the LDP and supporting documentation (including representations) to the Welsh Government in June 2017 with public consultation expected to take place during November – December 2016. Adoption of the Plan is not anticipated until March 2018 and therefore only limited weight should be afforded to the emerging Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) 2013 to 2028.
- 4.5 The key policies from the current statutory development plan framework and other planning policies are set out below. For detailed policy wording, please refer to the policy documents.

Statutory Development Plan Policies

- Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996 – 2011:
 - o PS2 - The Broad Location of Development;
 - o PS11 - Biodiversity;
 - o GDP1 - Development Objectives;
 - o EC4 - Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland;
 - o EC5 - Special Landscape Areas;
 - o S9 - Loss of Local Facilities;
 - o CLF1 - Existing Facilities;
 - o T8 - Parking

Non-Statutory Development Plan Policies

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (2016):
 - o Section 4 'Planning for Sustainability';
 - o Section 5 'Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast';
 - o Section 7 'Economic Development';
 - o Section 8 'Transport'; and
 - o Section 11 'Tourism, Sport and Recreation'.
- Technical Advice Notes (TANs):
 - o TAN5 'Nature Conservation & Planning' (2009);
 - o TAN12 'Design' (2016);
 - o TAN18 'Transport' (2007); and
 - o TAN23 'Economic Development' (2014).
- Wales Spatial Plan (2008):
 - o Section 16 'North East Wales - Border and Coast'.

Non-Statutory Development Plan Policies – SPDs and SPGs

- Local Plan Guidance:
 - o Note 7 – Landscaping and Development;
 - o Note 16 - Parking Standards; and
 - o Note 17 - Trees and Development.

5 Development Appraisal

- 5.1 The purpose of this section is to assess the application proposals in the context of planning policy and guidance at the national and local level.

Site Allocation

- 5.2 The application site is allocated within a Special Landscape Area to which Policy EC5 applies. Policy EC5 states that within Special Landscape Areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development, other than for agriculture, small-scale farm-based and other rural enterprises, and essential operational development by utility service providers, will be strictly controlled. Development will be required to conform to a high standard of design and landscaping, and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints.
- 5.3 The proposed development does not comprise of agriculture, small-scale farm-based and other rural enterprises, and essential operational development by utility service providers, therefore the proposed use must be strictly controlled.
- 5.4 With regard to the proposed development it is important to consider the actual amount of new development proposed. This is expressed in the below table (all figures used are gross external floorspace in m²):

Plan label	Current use	Existing gross external floorspace (m ²)	Proposed use	Proposed gross external floorspace (m ²)
1	Hotel	985	Main activity centre building with extension	1,420
2	Dwellinghouse	237	Staff / administration building	237
3	Stable block	61	Watersport showers & changing	116
4	Garage	45	Toilet block	45
5	Outbuilding	52	<i>Demolished</i>	0
6	Outbuilding	34	<i>Demolished</i>	0
7	Hay barn structure	74	High Activities Building	185
9	Storage	31	Storage	31
10	Wood cabin	57	Archery & Caving	248
11	Wood cabin (store)	20	<i>As above</i>	0
TOTAL CURRENTLY ON SITE		1,596		
Permitted Extension		704		
TOTAL FLOORSPACE PERMITTED ON SITE		2,300	TOTAL FLOORSPACE PROPOSED ON SITE	2,282

- 5.5 The above table clearly demonstrates that the proposed development is smaller than the fall-back position, i.e. the existing hotel building, dwelling and outbuildings with the permitted extension. The proposed development will result in 18m² less floorspace than that which is already permitted at the site. Therefore, subject to a high standard of design and landscaping, the proposed development, in principle, will not cause any additional harm to the Special Landscape Area.
- 5.6 The existing ancillary buildings on site actually do cause harm to the special landscape area with most being run down and dilapidated. Some examples are provided within the photographs below:



Figure 1 Existing outbuilding



Figure 2 Existing wood cabins

- 5.7 In comparison the 3 proposed ancillary buildings, and the elevational treatments to the converted garage, have been developed carefully by trying to create a subtle addition to the site that house the needs of the centre with materials that sympathise and complement the existing materials and objects present throughout the site.
- 5.8 The proposed extension design, taken from the previous approved application, has been developed to accommodate the reduction in size and to maintain the existing entry point to the existing hotel building as the main focal point. The materials and style of this addition are to be a continuation of the existing building.
- 5.9 Therefore the proposed development, alongside the extensive landscape works that are proposed, will result in a better landscape environment than both the existing development on site, and that of the fall-back position (which includes the permitted extension). The wide array of landscape proposals including extensive tree and hedgerow planting, mounding and lake will further screen the ancillary buildings and minimise the developments visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints.
- 5.10 Given the high specification of design proposed for the new outbuildings, the appropriate design for the extension and the extensive, high-quality landscape Masterplan proposed the site, the development will conserve and enhance the landscape and comply with UDP Policies EC5, PS2, .

Loss of Local/Community Facility

- 5.11 When operating the former Cross Lanes Country House Hotel had an element of non-resident access in the form of public bar. Therefore the hotel did have some community value and UDP Policies S9 and CLF1 seek to retain community uses.
- 5.12 The submitted Marketing and Viability Report produced by Colliers. Colliers International was instructed to sell the Cross Lanes Country House Hotel, Wrexham in June 2013. The document provides a thorough history of the marketing process for the hotel, including the asking prices sought and the number of viewings this generated. Ultimately Colliers could not find a purchaser for the hotel due to struggling market conditions for hotel businesses and, most importantly, because the hotel had been in a loss making position for five out of the past six years as follows:
- 2010 – Loss of £21,695
 - 2011 – Profit of £14,422
 - 2012 – Loss of £57,185
 - 2013 – Loss of £37,129
 - 2014 – Loss of £36,320
 - 2015 – Loss of £64,540
- 5.13 Other reasons for the failure to secure a purchaser for the hotel are provided in the Marketing and Viability Report. Ultimately this document demonstrates that the Cross Lanes Country House Hotel was no longer viable as a hotel operation. This is based on the knowledge of over 3 years' worth of marketing activity (2 years in excess of the policy requirement) where all reasonable attempts to sell or let the business have proved unsuccessful.
- 5.14 It could also be argued that the former Cross Lanes Country House Hotel was starting to look unsightly (particularly internally) and required substantial investment to improve it and secure its longevity.

- 5.15 Due to continued losses, more than 3 years after the hotel was first marketed for sale as a going concern the owner took the decision to cease trading and to sell the property with vacant possession. At the point of sale, the property was no longer providing a community facility and the property will not provide a community facility until it is able to re-open as a viable business. The proposal put forward by Robinwood offers a strong business, with a community provision that is consistent with the main business operation.
- 5.16 Robinwood's proposed use for the site, whilst not strictly a community-led use, will deliver substantial improvement and investment to the site, securing 38 full-time and 14 part-time jobs in the process. This will ensure that there is a long future for the building an active, appropriate use at the site for many years to come, rather than letting the building and site fall into further disrepair.
- 5.17 Furthermore, as a direct result from Robinwood's extension community consultation Robinwood are proposing to allow members of the community to use the lounge facilities on Friday evenings, when the centre is operating. Further community benefits, including activity sessions for local children on Friday evenings, open days for local people and the potential for hiring space has also been proposed by Robinwood. This is all documented in the submitted Pre-Application Consultation Report and we look forward to securing the details of such community provision during the determination of the planning application.
- 5.18 Allowing residents to use the lounge area on Friday evenings, alongside the host of other community initiatives sited within the Pre-Application Consultation, will ensure that the proposed development will result in a detrimental impact to the social and economic fabric of its locality. The development therefore complies with UDP Policies S9 and CLF1.

Biodiversity

- 5.19 Ecological surveys, site appraisals and impact assessments were carried out with respect to the entire planning application site. Habitats within the grounds include amenity grassland, mixed woodland and semi-improved grassland.
- 5.20 Amphibians, bats, badgers, and birds are known to occur on site. Invertebrates, brown hare, hedgehog and reptiles have also been recorded locally. Mitigation has been proposed, following which there will be no negative effect on protected species. A license for a disturbance to badgers and a great crested newt EPS license will be required prior to works being undertaken.
- 5.21 The creation of a lake, sowing of wildflower seed, new tree and shrub planting and retention of woodland will encourage a wider variety of wildlife to use the site than already occurs. The trees to be cleared are of low significance within the site and surrounding area.
- 5.22 Contractors will be observant for protected species and all nesting birds. Should any protected species be found during construction, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.
- 5.23 With the mitigation measures proposed in place, the proposed development will improve the biodiversity value of the site and therefore the development complies with UDP Policy PS11.

Trees & Hedgerows

- 5.24 The proposed development has been specifically designed to ensure that the impact on existing trees and hedgerows is kept to a minimum. Where trees have had to be removed, priority of retention has been directed to the higher category trees, focusing on the lower category trees first for removal.
- 5.25 It is also important to note that 2 Category A trees on site have permission to be removed through the grant of planning application P/2012/0189, which remains extant. The delivery of this permitted extension would result in the loss of 2 Category A trees that can now be retained due to the reduction in the size of the extension now proposed.
- 5.26 Throughout the lengthy pre-application discussions with Wrexham County Borough Council the impact was a key concern of the Planners and their Arboricultural Officer. The scheme has evolved over time to ensure that tree and hedgerow loss is kept to a minimum. This, coupled with the extensive tree and hedgerow planting proposed ensures that the proposed development will appropriately conserve and manage existing hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland and wildlife. The new planting proposed will enhance the character of the landscape. Therefore the proposed development complies with UDP Policy EC4.

Parking

- 5.27 Currently there are 45 standard car spaces and 4 disabled car spaces on site. There are also 2 longer bays marked but these are not suitable for coaches. The proposed development includes 39 standard car spaces, 4 disabled car spaces and 3 coach spaces. Overall some parking has been lost to provide manoeuvring space for coaches, but the spaces remaining are comfortably sufficient for the activity centre operation.
- 5.28 In this instance it is not considered that the parking standards contained within Local Planning Guidance Note 16 are not relevant. This suggests 1 car space per 2 bed spaces for C2 Use Class Residential Institutions but the proposed bed space will primarily be occupied by primary school children and teachers that will arrive by coach. The parking provision sought is adequate for maximum amount of staff at the site at any one time whilst also anticipating the need for additional spaces for visitors.
- 5.29 Ultimately the proposed development will provide an appropriate amount of vehicle parking without resulting in any need for people to park outside the site, in potentially dangerous locations. The site is also within a sustainable location and Robinwood, as a responsible operator, will use measures such as car sharing for staff to ensure the site is used sustainably. Therefore the proposed development complies with UDP Policy T8.

6 Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared and submitted by Urban Vision Ltd on behalf of Robinwood Activity Centres Ltd. It forms part of a suite of documents in support of an application which seeks 'full' planning permission for the change of use of the existing Cross Lanes Country Hotel from C1 Use Class hotel to C2 Use Class Children's Activity Centre to include extension to existing hotel building, the erection of buildings and equipment for children's activities with associated car parking, coach parking, landscaping and railings
- 6.2 Discussions between the applicants and Wrexham County Borough Council, key consultees, stakeholders and the community regarding the proposed development have taken place in advance of the planning application's submission.
- 6.3 Section 4 of this Statement has provided a comprehensive planning policy analysis, whilst Section 5 has demonstrated how the proposed development seeks to meet the key objectives of the saved policies contained within the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011.
- 6.4 In conclusion it has been demonstrated that the proposed development complies with statutory Development Plan Policies and is in accordance with the guidance set out within Non-Statutory Development Plan Policies. Therefore it is requested that planning permission be granted for this policy compliant, sustainable form of development.

Urban Vision Partnership Ltd

October 2016