

Planning Technical Note – Net World Sports, Wrexham: Phosphates and Nutrient Neutrality

Introduction

1. This note presents the Applicant's (Net World Sports) understanding of the phosphates issue currently impacting decision-making within the Wrexham Industrial Estate. It also considers relevant guidance and how Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) have been considering applications in recent months with regard to this matter.
2. The River Dee and Bala Lake is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is a protected site designated to conserve habitats and species that are considered to be most in need of protection at a European level. These are established under the Habitat Directive, a European Law adopted in 1992 which aims to protect and restore natural habitats and wild flora and fauna across Europe.
3. The Habitats Regulations (2017, as amended) require Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to act as Competent Authorities, undertaking Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRAs) where development may affect a SAC. Natural Resource Wales (NRW) is the statutory consultee for the Appropriate Assessment stage.
4. Welsh Water operates the Five Fords Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTW) under an environmental permit granted by NRW. This permit sets conditions on the quality and quantity of effluent the plant can discharge into the River Clywedog (a tributary to the River Dee). Historically, there has been headroom within the permit to accommodate known foul drainage within the immediate public sewerage system. In addition, the WwTW has a phosphorus consent limit in place until 31/03/2030. From discussions with Welsh Water in November 2025, there is currently an allowance for 1.0mg/l as a limit but only 0.4mg/l is currently allocated against the permit.
5. However, more recently NRW has confirmed that through its monitoring the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC is failing to meet its environmental targets for phosphates (notably, 60% of SAC river line water bodies in Wales are also failing). Therefore, their advice to Local Planning Authorities is that relying on permits is no longer possible in decision-making.
6. WCBC, NRW, and Welsh Water have had meetings to discuss this issue and promote a cross-sector solution; however, few tangible details are available. We understand that a final solution may be 'years away' and that NRW are seeking reductions in the limits within existing phosphates permits, effectively curtailing growth.
7. WCBC have noted that they are not willing to take the application to committee until they are able to complete a Habitat Regulations Assessment that concludes no adverse impact on the SAC. However, the Applicant disagrees. At very least, it is considered possible to apply a Grampian Condition that restricts occupation of developments until appropriate mitigation is in place to ensure there is no risk of significant adverse effects on European protected flora and fauna.

Public Sector Guidance

8. Dee Catchment Phosphorus Reduction Strategy (DCPRS) is a 'living document' that has been developed by WCBC and Flintshire County Council in consultation with NRW and other stakeholders. The document was published in November 2021.
9. The document sets out the strategic approach for delivering phosphorous reductions in the Dee catchment, while also facilitating growth proposed within the de-adopted LDP (which is still a material consideration in decision-making) and demonstrating that development can be delivered in practise. The document was directly related to Policy NE6: Waste Water Treatment and River Water Quality in Wrexham's LDP (2013-2028) before it was unadopted and Policy EN15: Water Resources in Flintshire's LDP (2015-2030).
10. NRW's River Dee Management Catchment Summary notes that this covers an area of 2,251 square kilometres, mainly in Wales but in the lower reaches the Dee often runs along the border with England, as noted below.

Figure 1. Dee Management Catchment

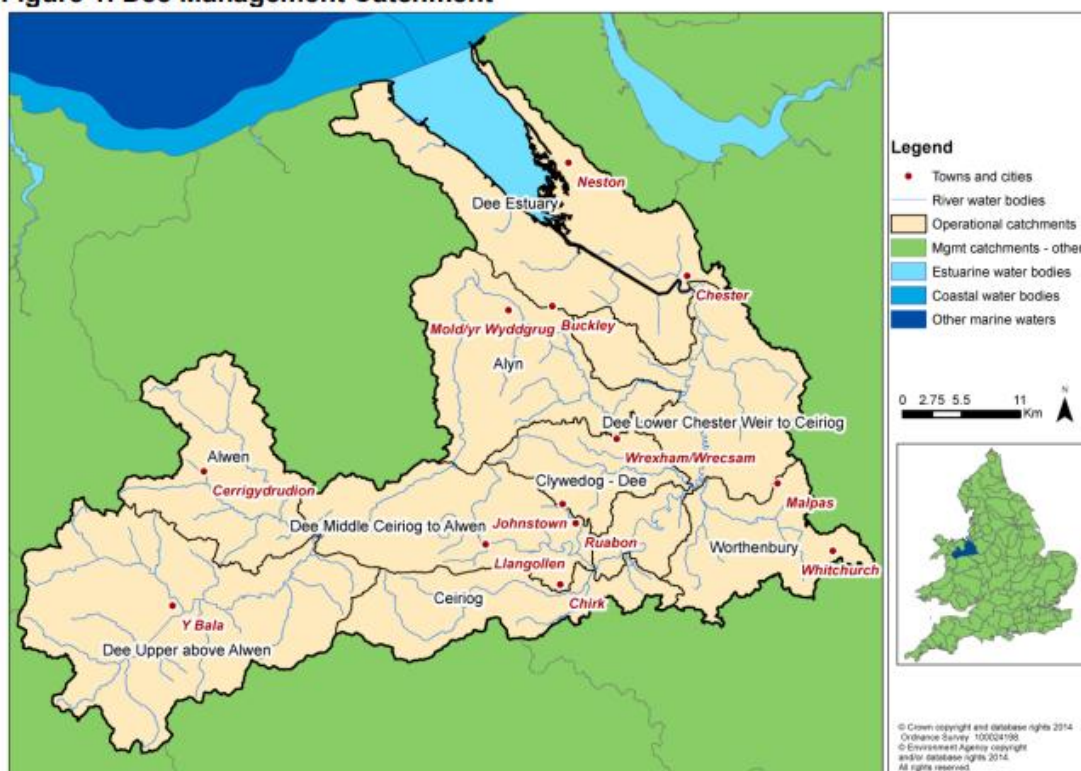


Figure 1 - River Dee Catchment

11. NRW guidance (Version 4, June 2024) confirms that development in nutrient-sensitive SAC catchments must demonstrate no net increase in phosphate loading. To control this matter, Councils such as Wrexham are working with NRW in pausing making decisions on planning applications until the issue is resolved, or the pollutants in the River Dee are decreased.
12. The Welsh Government Nutrient Budget Calculator (latest update: 8 July 2025) is the required tool for quantifying impacts and mitigation needs. The calculator determines whether development will require a nutrient budget to achieve nutrient neutrality. This is worked out by calculating the total nutrient load the proposed development will add (typically in kilograms per year).

13. In the event that a proposed development could increase phosphate levels in the river, NRW require mitigation measures to be put in place that will allow the developer to demonstrate 'nutrient neutrality' or 'betterment' before receiving consent for the development go to ahead.
14. NRW principles require mitigation to be effective, deliverable from the outset, enforceable, secured for the lifetime of the development, and not undermining restoration objectives. For each proposed mitigation, NRW request that the following information is received by the Local Planning Authority:
 - Details how the measure(s) would avoid or reduce adverse effects on the SAC (considering the predicted duration of the effects).
 - Demonstration how the measure(s) would achieve nutrient neutrality.
 - Confirmation how the measure(s) will be implemented, and by whom.
 - Details how the measure will be maintained and who will be responsible for maintenance.
 - Visual information how the measure will be monitored to ensure it is effective.
15. Nutrient neutrality can include existing site context (such as being agricultural and within the catchment area of the River Dee) and off-site mitigation. NRW accept that if development still adds nutrients after on-site mitigation has taken place, developers can offset the impact somewhere else, for example on nearby land or buying nutrient credits.
16. An interim planning policy statement was issued by the Welsh Government in August 2025¹ with the purpose of publishing an interim planning policy statement on Development in Special Areas of Conservation affected by phosphorus. This guidance is drafted to facilitate the delivery of development in SAC River catchments affected by phosphorus. Applying this guidance is intended to enable statutory authorities to identify a pathway through which development applications can be determined, taking account of the requirements of the Habitats Regulations in respect of water quality related impacts associated with phosphorus only.
17. There are four pathways available, summarised below:

Pathway	Commentary
1. Threshold-based approach	A decision can be taken as to whether the relative contribution from development can be regarded as sufficiently inconsequential (in terms of whether it might undermine the conservation objectives and hence be 'significant' in HRA terms). Where this is the case, a common-sense approach might be applied without a need for further work to quantify or draw comparisons with anticipated future improvements. An important step is to consider the 'baseline'. The guidance suggests that two elements are relevant: i) assumptions about water usage and occupancy rates, ii) assumptions about what proportion of occupants are 'new' compared to those already living within the catchment. To agree a threshold approach planning authorities will need to be satisfied that the additional loading from development will not, over a defined timeframe, undermine the achievement of the conservation objectives.

¹ Welsh Government (August 2025) Development in special areas of conservation (SAC) rivers: planning guidance

Pathway	Commentary
2. Existing measures without need for further mitigation	Relies on NRW confirming that their strategy to reduce capacity in phosphate permits will achieve downstream phosphate targets. It is difficult to confirm this due to on-going work; however, we understand NRW are still seeking reduction in phosphate targets. We understand Welsh Water have offered to reduce the permit target within the Five Fords WWtW.
3. Mitigation-based approach	It is necessary to recognise that the approach to mitigation options may need to take account of delivery timescales. The delivery of some development may be linked to Government targets and delays may represent a public interest. Where the target cannot be met through reliance on mitigation-based options planning authorities should consider the derogation tests. Planning authorities will need to satisfy themselves in respect of assumptions made under a 'fair share' approach and 'other actions' required to avoid deterioration. 'Other action' relates to improvements NRW would make based on an understanding of further improvements need, appropriate steps to take, and a clear timeframe to achieve these. These are not clearly identified currently. Where 'fair share' action to deliver necessary improvements has not yet been secured planning authorities should determine whether such action can be secured. In other words, is further action to deliver fair share improvements from other sources achievable in practice. Relevant statutory bodies are expected to deliver further action as may be necessary to secure required improvements and avoid deterioration of SACs. As a final resort within this pathway, where public bodies agree that 'fair share' action to achieve the necessary improvements cannot be secured (and NRW have confirmed that the phosphates targets for the river stretches concerned remain appropriate) or where an integrated approach to the delivery of management, restoration and mitigation is not achievable in practice, or might compromise delivery of relevant Government timescales, it will be necessary to consider developer led mitigation to achieve nutrient neutrality over the lifetime of proposed development. Assuming the sewerage undertaker has confirmed capacity to treat additional wastewater from the proposed development, permission can be granted under a policy caveat approach with necessary conditions.
4. Derogation-based approach	Options to deliver development through a derogation-based approach should be viewed as a last resort. It is an expectation of Welsh Government that every effort will be made to identify threshold-based and mitigation-based approaches. If a decision-maker is satisfied that, there are no alternative solutions to enable the project objectives to be met, it will then be necessary to weigh the public interest being served against the conservation interest which is at risk. This step will require the ecological implications of additional nutrient loading to be considered in light of the public interest which is served through the delivery of development. The decision which needs to be taken is whether the public interest overrides, or carries greater weight, than the conservation interest potentially at risk.

Pathway	Commentary
	The 'overriding' element of the decision is a judgement which essentially asks whether the need for the project outweighs (or overrides) the conservation interest that might be lost/damaged. Compensatory measures can be delivered on a project-by-project basis or at a strategic level. Should a derogation-based option be progressed within a given SAC catchment, it will be most effective to secure and deliver compensatory measures at a strategic level in respect of the quantum of development that is likely to be delivered. However, a case-by-case approach can also be taken where better suited to local circumstances, the catchment specific principle applies.

Local Applications – Wrexham Council

18. NWS were made aware that phosphates may be a matter for consideration when determining planning applications at a meeting with WCBC in March 2025. Since then, a number of planning applications have still been taken to committee and determined, with examples provided below.

P/2024/1195 - CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO EQUESTRIAN AND ERECTION OF STABLES AND STORAGE CONTAINER – Approved 14 March 2025

19. WCBC were able to apply a condition requiring a Nutrient Management Plan that ensured phosphate / nutrient run off was appropriately managed.
20. **Conclusion:** Whilst noting the scale of application is different to NWS projects, it is clear that the principle of using a planning condition to require further details on mitigation for this matter has been deemed appropriate.

P/2025/0090 - VARIATION OF CONDITION 2 OF PLANNING PERMISSION P/2023/0776 TO AMEND DESIGN

21. This application related to design of the Kopp Stand at Wrexham Football Council. A Section 73 Planning Application generates a new planning permission and is captured under the Habitat Regulations; therefore, this is still comparable to NWS's context.
22. Previous arguments included comparing the output from increased capacity with a 'fallback' position of the stand being refurbished (without needing planning permission). However, Welsh Government proposed an approach of *"acknowledging that the proposed development could result in a small increase in foul water discharges (with an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations undertaken to quantify this) with the justification for the grant of planning permission being on the basis of imperative reasons of overriding public importance i.e. the regeneration and place shaping benefits"*
23. Another element of the proposal introduced event space. Arguments were made that these would likely attract people / companies from within the local area (therefore, not increasing the volume of phosphates on the River Dee SAC). Ultimately, due to the nature of events, WCBC felt that there was potential for out of catchment visitors. Instead, in the absence of any detailed scheme of mitigation that would sufficiently offset the additional phosphorous generated by non-match day use, it is considered that the use of the event/exhibition space and the hospitality facilities on non-match days may need to be restricted until such time as this matter is satisfactorily resolved. We assume this was subject to a planning condition.
24. **Conclusion:** WCBC is willing to accept an argument that regeneration and placemaking benefits are a factor in determining applications where there is a phosphates issue. In addition, there are further examples of the use of planning conditions to limit capacity and/or use until a detailed mitigation scheme is achieved.

P/2022/0840 - EXTENSION TO WASTE WATER TREATMENT WORKS, ASSOCIATED NOISE MITIGATION PROPOSALS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS – Approved April 2025

25. This application concerned on-site water treatment facilities at Maelor Poultry in Wrexham. A subsequent application to increase capacity of this facility was approved at the June 2025 committee.
26. The Officer's Report noted that this application would improve the quality of treated waste water discharged from the Site, supporting an intensification of use on Site.

27. **Conclusion:** An on-site solution to improve quality of waste water leaving a site helped to address concerns over potential impact from phosphates despite intensifying an existing use.

P/2024/0123 - CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO 10 NO. UNITS (CLASS B1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) – Approved May 2025

28. The Officer's Report notes that there are types of non-residential development which are not considered to result in an increase in nutrient discharge to the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC. These include developments not expected to serve a population from outside of an SAC catchment who are not already served by residential connections to existing public or private sewers discharging within the SAC river catchment.
29. In this case, the units were under 200 sq. m each (therefore, with a total floorspace of 2,000 sq. m). It was considered that these were likely to be occupied by local businesses employing people from within the SAC catchment area. Having regard to this, it is considered unlikely that the proposed development would increase the amount of phosphorous entering the SAC.
30. **Conclusion:** A scheme which is likely to draw staff from within the River Dee Catchment area can be screened out of having impact on the SAC catchment area.

P/2024/1070 – ERECTION OF 9 DWELLINGS AND FORMATION OF VEHICULAR ACCESS

31. The Officer's Report notes two recommendations. The first proposed that the scheme was approved on the basis that the Council modify another planning permission which the Applicant had elsewhere in the borough to reduce the number of units by 4. The second proposed the scheme was refused.
32. The Applicant has made an argument that they have already reduced another scheme within Wrexham by 4 units and they omitted one unit from a scheme they recently completed (i.e. approved for 51 units but only delivered 50). As a result of the above reductions plus the use of a Council power to modify another planning permission, they argue that the scheme is nutrient neutral. The scheme was approved in October 2025.
33. **Conclusion:** WCBC is willing to accept an argument that the reality of how schemes are delivered or operated is a consideration in finding development appropriate with regard to phosphates.

P/2024/1386 – ERECTION OF 137 DWELLINGS ON LAND PREVIOUSLY APPROVED UNDER PLANNING CONSENT P/2007/0686

34. The application was recommended for approval by the Wrexham Planning committee on the 6th October 2025, subject to a S106 Agreement.
35. Natural Resources Wales were consulted on the application, with their response being 'the proposed development could potentially lead to an increase of phosphorous load from the receiving wastewater treatment works into the River Dee and Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation.'
36. Within the Planning Committee minutes, there is no mention of phosphates and the impact this will have on the River Dee. It is not explained within the submission whether foul drainage will go to the Five Fords WwTW, or a separate treatment works.
37. There are no draft conditions relating to providing further information on foul water drainage.

38. **Conclusion:** The proposed development is recognised as having potential to lead to an increase in phosphorous load within the River Dee and Bala Lake, however, is recommended to approval subject to a S106 agreement to provide affordable housing and education contributions.

Net World Sport Projects

P/2025/0431 Strategic Ecology Corridor

39. This planning application was submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council on the 23rd May 2025 and is currently being reviewed by the planning department.
40. The proposal for the development is for the change of use of land from agricultural to ecological mitigation areas, together with the construction of bunds and ponds. The planning application has been submitted to assist in the offsetting of ecological area for planning applications P/2023/0497, P/2025/0143, P/2025/0110 and the future expansion of the existing Net World Sports HQ building on Bryn Lane.
41. Tier Consult have carried out a Phosphate Assessment, based off guidance set out by Natural Resources Wales and national standards to determine the phosphate baseline for the development.
42. Within Stage 1 (additional nutrient loading from wastewater), no phosphorus values will be generated. Stage 2 (nutrient loading from pre-existing landcovers) will result in a reduction of 23.35 kg TP/year. Stage 3 (nutrient loading from new landcovers) will result in an increase of 0.35 kg TP/year. Stage 3S (nutrient load removed from SuDS) will not result in any changes.
43. Therefore, the overall outcome of phosphorus removal from the development proposal is a loss of 23kg TP/year, indicating an overall net improvement in phosphorus loading across the site.
44. The development will not increase built floor space, nor will it have people working or visiting the site on a regular basis. It is therefore unlikely to have an impact on phosphates within the River Dee.
45. The development proposal offers the opportunity to offset ecological mitigation from various planning proposals. Therefore, the benefits the proposals brings to the ecological environment outweighs any negligible impact on phosphates within the River Dee.

P/2023/0497 - Land North of Bryn Lane / Utopia City

46. This planning application was submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council in July 2023. The hybrid application is seeking full planning permission for demolition of the existing buildings and the severable and phased erection of Class B1/B2/B8 development with ancillary Class B1A floorspace and associated infrastructure (including substation and access); outline planning permission for the severable and phased construction of Class B1C/B2/B8 development with ancillary class B1a floorspace; retail; drive-thru, hotel, petrol station (classes A1/A3/C1/Sui Generis); and associated infrastructure (all matters reserved).
47. A Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment was carried out to support the planning application in June 2023. The assessment reviews the potential effects of the proposed development within the context of one or more sites of international nature conservation importance.
48. The proposed on-site foul water drainage will feed into an existing Dwr Cymru Welsh Water 9DCWW) sewerage network which runs roughly north to south and across the western edge of the site. The network serves domestic properties and Holt Lodge Farm before crossing the industrial estate to the south. From the Industrial Estate, the network feeds south-westwards to the Five Fords WwTW where wastewater is treated before being discharged into the River Dee.

49. Tier Consult have carried out a Phosphate Assessment, based off guidance set out by NRW and national standards to determine the phosphate baseline for the development.
50. Their assessment and its assumptions are appended to this report. However, in conclusion, it calculates that a phosphorous budget of 12.47kg TP/year requires mitigation. It is notable that this figure includes a significant 20% buffer. For the detailed element of the Utopia City planning application, (Phase 1) 6.83kg TP/year requires mitigation and the outline element (Phase 2) requires 5.64kg TP/year.
51. The assumptions include that 25% of the future working population would be commuting from outside the catchment. This is as per Figure 1 of this note and covers a large area. The Applicant notes that the vast majority of their workforce resides within Wrexham (let alone the wider River Dee Catchment). Their operations are a storage and distribution use very similar to others in the Wrexham Industrial Estate.
52. Data from April 2024 published by the Welsh Government² suggests that, at a national level, 1,404,100 people worked in the area of which 37,400 (2.66%) commuted into the area. At a North Wales level, 303,800 work in the area of which 18,100 (6%) commuted into the area. At a Wrexham level, 63,500 people worked in the area of which 12,800 (20%) commuted into the area. Notably, of the 20%, it is likely that a proportion of them live within the River Dee Catchment Area, meaning that the number of commuters who generate a true net addition to the phosphate load into the River Dee will be lower.
53. It is noted that Wrexham has a higher percentage of inward commuters than the North Wales or National average. This may be due to its proximity to North West of England and larger populations in this region. The aspiration for Utopia City is that this attracts advanced manufacturing occupiers and this might attract some future employees from further afield.
54. However, the planning permission is for a range of typical employment uses found across the Wrexham Industrial Estate. Ultimately, end occupiers will be driven by market demand. It is considered that there are already innovative and market leading companies present in the Industrial Estate (such as JCB) who are similar to those who might occupy Utopia City in the future.
55. Net World Sports are also a good precedent for the type of company who may be attracted to Utopia City. Operating on an international scale, the business includes both traditional 'warehouse' operators working alongside professionals in technology, marketing, and digital communication. From reviewing their internal systems, Net World Sport note that only 18.53% of their workforce (286 people) lived outside Wales.
56. Therefore, 25% is a robust number to use in this assessment.
57. As noted above, we understand that sufficient capacity exists within the phosphate permit at the Five Fords Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW). However, in any case, mitigation in the form of an onsite treatment system will be installed. This will consist of a two-step system, an industry standard biological treatment plant followed by an Electrocoagulation (EC) system (Hydro EC system (Hydro EC system based on *Hydro Current*TM). This would remove nearly all phosphates from entering the water system.

² Welsh Government (2025) Commuting patterns by Welsh local authority [accessed November 2025] - <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Employment/Commuting/commutingpatterns-by-welshlocalauthority-measure>

58. It is considered that a combination of the mitigation based and the derogation pathways could be followed by WCBC to be satisfied about the impact from Utopia City in terms of phosphates. The proposals include on-site mitigation which would involve a treatment system that removes the vast majority of phosphates from entering the watercourse.
59. In addition, a proportion of the Strategic Ecology Corridor is already proposed as ecological mitigation for Utopia City. This will remove further agricultural land and subsequently reduce the phosphate load entering the River Dee catchment. The completion of these works can also be clearly required by condition and would need to be delivered prior to occupation of employment generating uses. NRW and the Welsh Government's guidance suggests that off-site mitigation can be used to effectively off-set development.
60. This would be sufficient to at least allow Phase 1 (i.e the detailed concept of the hybrid planning permission) to commence. Considering the timescales likely needed to deliver Phase 1, there may be a public sector solution in place when Phase 2 is brought forward. However, in any case, there is likely to be capacity within the Strategic Ecology Corridor to offset this phosphate load.
61. Finally, should a decision-maker have any concerns about a nominal, residual amount of phosphates entering the River Dee catchment then it is considered they can apply the derogation route.
62. This would involve WCBC accepting that any minor impact (bearing in mind that the Five Ford WWtW has headroom for phosphates) would be outweighed by the overriding public benefits of delivering employment floorspace which supports the expansion of the Wrexham Industrial Estate and was allocated in the 'found sound' version of the Wrexham Local Development Plan. It is also in line with the requirements of Future Wales 2040, the national development plan document.
63. In addition, Utopia City is a key component of the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone which is UK and Welsh Government initiative to drive economic growth across the region. The Investment Zone will allocate a significant amount of grant funding; however, obtaining planning permission is a critical milestone.
64. These arguments around regeneration and placemaking benefits were suggested by the Welsh Government with regard to Wrexham Football Club's stadium expansion (P/2025/0090). In this case, WCBC choose to apply a Grampian Condition restricting occupation of part of the scheme.

P/2025/0143 Land South of Bryn Lane

65. Planning application P/2025/0143 was submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council in February 2025. The proposal is for the demolition of existing structures and the erection of employment facilities (Class B2/B8) with ancillary office accommodation (Class B1a) including landscaping, parking, access and other associated works.
66. Notably, the amount of floorspace is 14,564 sq. m which is comparable to application P/2024/0123 approved by the Council at Planning Committee in May 2025 (circa 20,000 sq. m across 10 units). It is noted that these were a cluster of smaller individual units.
67. However, it is considered that Land South scheme is a small scheme within the context of the Wrexham Industrial Estate means that there is greater confidence that the unit will only attract staff living or working within the River Dee catchment area. The Applicant has a sales agreement with the Welsh Government, subject to planning permission being granted, and therefore permitting the developing would support wider Government objectives and could be seen as being in the public interest.
68. On balance, we consider that the Threshold Based pathway is appropriate and a common-sense approach could be applied. There is an argument to screen out impacts from Land South of Bryn Lane. This is on the basis that additional loading from development will not undermine the achievement of the conservation objectives.

Net World Sports Headquarters Extension

69. Net World Sport have been developing plans for an extension to their Headquarters Building in the Wrexham Industrial Estate. This would be to accommodate Net World Sport's growing 3PL storage business which currently occupies space within the existing Headquarters Building. This is a highly automated function with minimal employee requirements, with the warehouse effectively acting as space for pallets to be housed until needed.
70. Currently, it is anticipated that the job creation from the new facility would be 11 staff members. However, these will all be relocated from the existing Headquarters Building. Therefore, there is no net increase in employees on site and, subsequently, no increase in persons from outside the River Dee Catchment as a result of the Proposed Development.
71. Applying the Threshold Based pathway, it is possible to take a common-sense based approach and screen out any impacts from phosphates on the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC. This is on the basis that additional loading from development will not undermine the achievement of the conservation objectives.
72. A similar style approach was taken by WCBC on the application P/2024/1070 which was approved at Planning Committee in October 2025.

Summary

73. WCBC's current stance is that will not take Utopia City (P/2023/0497) to planning committee due to the on-going phosphates issue in the area. A strategic approach for resolving this matter needs to be undertaken, noting Dee Catchment Phosphorus Reduction Strategy (DCPRS). This must be driven by public sector bodies including NRW, Welsh Water, and WCBC.
74. However, the timescales for a strategic approach to be agreed are unclear. Therefore, certain pathways within the Welsh Government's for approving schemes impacting SACs due to phosphate, aren't available. This guidance is applicable to all development which has an impact on the SAC. Notably, PEDW are recently concluded a public inquiry on KSS2 North in September 2025 where phosphates are a key issue. This decision is still pending.
75. Decision-makers, including WCBC, can clearly bring schemes to planning committee despite there being concerns over phosphates. Fundamentally, a Grampian Condition can be applied restricting occupation until the Local Authority is satisfied that impacts on the SAC can be mitigated. This would either be through a strategic approach or through other forms of mitigation.
76. In addition to PEDW's decision to determine the KSS2 North scheme, WCBC has brought numerous schemes to committee with phosphates issues as illustrated above. The Applicant considers the same approach can be taken to Utopia City, especially noting its important role within the Wrexham and Flintshire Investment Zone.
77. Furthermore, we consider that an argument around nutrient neutrality can be made for numerous Net World Sports schemes, as summarised below:

Scheme	Pathway	Commentary
Strategic Ecology Corridor	Pathway 1 – Threshold	There is no phosphate impact and, using the Welsh Government nutrient calculator, the scheme would provide a phosphate benefit from removing agricultural land meaning there is further value in mitigation
Utopia City	Pathways 3 & 4 – Developer-led mitigation and derogation	We have defined the requirements for phosphate mitigation through use of the Welsh Government nutrient calculator. The Proposed Development includes an on-site treatment system which will remove the vast majority of phosphates from entering the watercourse. In absence of a strategic approach that can be achieved in a timely fashion, developer-led mitigation must be considered. In addition, part of the Strategic Ecology Corridor is allocated against Utopia City to support ecological mitigation. This land is being removed from agricultural use and therefore is a further reduction in phosphates entering the River Dee. Subject to agreement of this approach with WCBC, the relevant proportion of the Strategic Ecology Corridor can be identified as phosphates

Scheme	Pathway	Commentary
		mitigation for Utopia (assuming more land than is already identified for ecological mitigation is required). We consider that these two elements alone are sufficient for WCBC to consider the scheme nutrient neutral under Pathway 3. However, in addition, we believe there is an overriding public interest in approving Utopia City. This is an allocated site within the 'found sound' version of the Wrexham Local Development Plan, representing an extension to the Wrexham Industrial Estate (a regionally significant employment hub). Its development also accords with Future Wales. Finally, it is an important component of the Wrexham and Flintshire Investment Zone – a UK and Welsh Government initiative to drive investment and economic growth. If there were also remaining concerns about a nominal, residual amount of phosphates entering the River Dee, the decision-maker should take the above into account. As a final resort, we have seen WCBC is willing to apply Grampian Conditions to restrict occupation until a wider solution is found. This approach is common-place across the United Kingdom.
HQ Extension	Pathway 1 – Threshold	This scheme is still in the pre-planning phase. However, the purpose of HQ Extension is to accommodate Net World Sport's growing "3PL" business. This is effectively providing space for storage of pallets for third party customers. Whilst still generating significant economic benefits, this is a highly automated operation. The Applicant's assumption is that staff currently working as part of the 3PL business space within Headquarters Building will simply move across to the Extension buildings. Therefore, there is no net increase in staff on site. A common-sense approach would suggest that there cannot be impacts on the SAC as a result and this scheme, once submitted, can be screened out.
Land South	Pathway 1 – Threshold	The proposed development is only 14,564 sq. m. WCBC approved another scheme with c. 20,000 sq. m in May 2025 (across ten units) and considered it likely that the employees would likely come from within the River Dee Catchment Area.

Scheme	Pathway	Commentary
		Figure 1 of this note illustrates the River Dee Catchment Area which is a considerable area, stretching from Chester through to Whitchurch at its eastern boundary. This is a large area which adds weight to our argument.

78. We would welcome WCBC's opinion on this note and to confirm a solution where the decision-maker can be comfortable taking Utopia City to committee.