2026

Needs and Educational Justification Statement

Change of Use from Dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to Independent School (Use Class F1(a))

Cumbers House, Gredington, Hanmer, SY13 3DH

Cockwill
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NEED AND EDUCATIONAL JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

Planning Application: Change of Use from Dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to Independent School (Use Class F1(a))

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1. Introduction

This Need and Educational Justification Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed change of use of Cumbers House to a small independent school providing education for up to 20 pupils aged 11 to 19 years.

The proposed school is intended to meet the educational needs of children who are unable to thrive in larger educational settings due to social, emotional, behavioural or other vulnerabilities. Although the school will provide mainstream education, it will offer a highly personalised and nurturing environment designed to support pupils who require smaller class sizes, consistent routines and enhanced pastoral care.

The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate that the proposal responds to an identified educational need and delivers substantial public benefits in accordance with national and local planning policy.

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2. National Educational Context

Across England and Wales there has been a sustained increase in demand for specialist educational provision for children whose needs cannot be adequately met within conventional mainstream schools. Factors contributing to this include:

- increasing numbers of children requiring additional pastoral support;
- greater recognition of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs;
- increasing school attendance challenges;
- rising demand for alternative and specialist educational placements;
- increased pressure on local authority education budgets and placement availability.

Many local authorities rely upon independent schools to provide suitable placements where maintained schools are unable to meet individual needs.

The proposed school will contribute positively to this growing national requirement by providing a small, high-quality educational setting capable of delivering personalised education.

3. Local Need

wrexham and neighbouring authorities continue to experience increasing demand for specialist educational provision for vulnerable children.
The proposed school will serve pupils from Wrexham and local authority areas where suitable placements are not always readily available.
The school is not intended to compete directly with existing mainstream schools. Instead, it will complement existing educational provision by supporting children who require a different style of learning environment to achieve their educational potential.

The modest scale of the proposal reflects its specialist role.

4. Educational Philosophy

The proposed school will be based upon the following principles:

- small class sizes;
- personalised learning;
- strong pastoral support;
- structured daily routines;
- positive behavioural support;
- outdoor learning opportunities;
- close collaboration with families and commissioning authorities.

The educational approach recognises that vulnerable children often benefit from calm surroundings, consistent staffing and individual attention.

The extensive grounds at Cumbers House provide opportunities for supervised outdoor education, wellbeing activities and recreational learning that cannot easily be replicated within more urban educational settings.

5. Suitability of the Site

Cumbers House is particularly well suited to the proposed educational use.

The property provides:

- an existing residential-scale building capable of adaptation;
- generous internal accommodation;
- extensive private grounds;
- existing parking provision;
- safe vehicular access;
- a peaceful rural environment.

The rural setting is considered a positive attribute for this form of education.

For many vulnerable children, quieter environments reduce anxiety, improve concentration and assist emotional regulation.

The proposal therefore seeks to utilise the characteristics of the site as an educational benefit rather than introducing intensive development into the countryside.

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6. Scale of Development

The proposal has deliberately been designed to remain small.

Maximum capacity will be:

- 20 pupils;
- 8 staff.

This enables high staff-to-pupil ratios and ensures that educational provision remains personalised.

The modest scale also ensures that impacts upon neighbouring occupiers and the local highway network remain limited.

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7. Benefits to Local Authorities

The proposed school has the potential to provide additional placement opportunities for local authorities responsible for securing appropriate education for vulnerable children. Benefits include:

- increased placement availability;
- reduced travel distances for some pupils;
- improved educational outcomes;
- flexible commissioning opportunities;
- reduced pressure on existing specialist schools.

The proposal therefore contributes positively towards educational resilience across the wider region.

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8. Community Benefits

The proposal will deliver a range of wider public benefits including:

- increased educational choice;
- creation of skilled local employment;
- investment in an existing property;
- support for local businesses and services;
- productive reuse of an existing building; • enhancement of community infrastructure.

These benefits align with the social objective of sustainable development set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

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9. Planning Policy Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework places significant weight on the importance of supporting education and community facilities.

The proposal accords with these objectives by: •

providing high-quality educational facilities;

- supporting healthy and inclusive communities; • making effective use of an existing building;

- delivering significant social benefits.

The proposal also supports the objectives of the adopted Core Strategy, particularly those relating to sustainable development, community facilities and social infrastructure.

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10. Planning Balance

The proposal results in:

- no extension to the building;
- no material alteration to its external appearance;
- modest traffic generation;
- limited operational impacts;
- retention of the existing landscape character.

Balanced against these limited impacts are significant public benefits arising from the provision of education for vulnerable children, local employment and the continued productive use of an existing property.
The proposal therefore represents sustainable development in planning terms.

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11. Conclusion

The proposed independent school addresses an identified and growing need for smallscale educational provision for vulnerable children who require a more supportive learning environment than can typically be provided in larger mainstream schools.

Cumbers House provides an appropriate location for this use, offering a peaceful rural setting, generous accommodation, safe access and extensive grounds that will enhance educational delivery.

The proposal delivers clear educational, social and economic benefits while preserving the character of the site and limiting impacts on neighbouring properties and the wider environment.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development and a positive addition to the educational infrastructure of Wrexham and Wales and

neighbouring authorities. The educational need and public benefits associated with the development provide strong support for the grant of planning permission.