PLANNING STATEMENT

APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY TRAINING FACILITIES
at
RUGBY ROAD, BINLEY WOODS

On behalf of
WASPS RUGBY CLUB
This page is left intentionally blank
Contents

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Background

3.0 Description of Development

4.0 Planning Policy

5.0 Appraisal of the application

6.0 Conclusions
This page is left intentionally blank
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Wasps Rugby Club for a planning application for temporary training facilities at Rugby Road, Binley Woods. The site is located on the edge of Coventry but within Rugby Borough.

1.2 Wasps Rugby Club recently moved to Coventry and are now based, and play their first team games, at the Ricoh Arena. However the Club currently still train in London and are looking to move their team training to the Coventry area. A permanent location has not yet been identified and the Club need to utilise facilities on a temporary basis until a permanent location is found.

1.3 The site on Rugby Road is currently home to Broadstreet Rugby Football Club. It contains a large changing and function building together with a range of pitches and training areas. An agreement has been reached between Wasps and Broadstreet Rugby Football Club to share facilities on a temporary basis. New temporary buildings are proposed on the site to provide the facilities necessary to support a top flight Rugby team, together with a new artificial running track, and the temporary change of use of the existing caretaker flat for use by Wasps associated with the training facilities.

1.4 The application is therefore for temporary permission for a 2 year period, for the erection of ‘temporary’ buildings, the provision of an artificial running track and the temporary change of use of an existing flat. Full details of the development are set out in Section 3 of this Statement.

1.5 This Statement seeks to explain the background to the proposals, outline the details of what is being applied for, before identifying relevant planning policies and assessing the suitability of the proposals against those planning policies. It then concludes on the suitability of the application proposals having regard to relevant national and local policy.
This page is left intentionally blank
2.0 BACKGROUND

History

2.1 Wasps are one of the top rugby brands in the world, playing in the top division of Club Rugby in England, a founding member and shareholder in the Premiership with a seat on the League’s Board of Directors.

2.2 Wasps FC were established in 1867 and are one of the World’s oldest Rugby Clubs. Their early years saw them renting various grounds around London but in 1923 they purchased a permanent home at Sudbury in West London. In recent history they spent a short spell playing at Loftus Road, the home of Queens Park Rangers FC, before they moved to High Wycombe in 2002 which they shared with Wycombe Wanderers Football Club. However, Wasps had no share in the ownership of Adams Park stadium where they played. Wasps also have a training ground and facilities in West London, which are not owned by the Club.

The move to Coventry

2.3 The club changed ownership in April 2013 and the new owner, Derek Richardson, with the Wasps management team, drew up ambitious plans for the club with the aim of enabling it to take more control over its own future. A key element of this plan is to identify a way for the club to own its own stadium, whether through a brand new development or the purchase of an existing stadium.

2.4 At the time Wasps has the second lowest turnover of any Premiership Club and consistently traded at a loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>2012/13 Turnover (£m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlequins</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton Saints</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saracens</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Irish</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasps</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 Having considered 24 sites in London and the South East, none of which could be delivered in less than five years, the Club noted that Coventry City FC had moved out of the Ricoh Arena and that it was without a tenant. This was Autumn 2013. Further investigation work
was undertaken and in December 2013 an initial meeting was held between Wasps and representatives from Arena Coventry Limited to discuss the purchase of the Arena. The sale was eventually completed in October, 2014 with Wasps first match in their new home taking place on 21st December, 2014.

The Economics of the Move

2.6 Immediately prior to moving to the Ricoh, Wasps average attendance at Adams Park was approximately 7,500. With the move to Coventry, average attendances have risen to over 19,000. As Wasps now control not just the Rugby Club, but all the ancillary revenues from the Ricoh Arena such as conference, exhibition and hotel, the turnover has increased by 223% to £21.4million and losses have fallen from £4.0million to £2.4million. The first season at the Ricoh has resulted in many additional and one-off costs linked to the move and the objective is to quickly move into profit in the coming seasons. The Club has also made a major investment in the Arena facilities helping to boost match day and non-match day turnover as well as generating very considerable economic benefit for the Coventry and surrounding area.

The Current Training Centre

2.7 Wasps existing training centre at Twyford Avenue in West London is shared with the amateur club and is inadequate for the needs of a modern Premiership Rugby Club. With the club relocating to the Ricoh Arena, the club now has the opportunity to design a new training facility which is both fit for purpose and will allow the squad to grow and develop in future years. Currently the squad comprises approximately 55 professional and senior academy players with 10 coaching and support staff. In future there may be an expansion of the Premiership from 12 to 14 teams which would necessitate the expansion of the squad by a further 5 players. Players spend most of their working time at the training centre. By offering a purpose built, well equipped and attractive facility, it can become a key influence when players are deciding whether or not to join the club.

Move to Coventry

2.8 With the club now based at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry and playing its matches there; it is essential to the club that it moves its training facilities to the Coventry area too. Proximity is necessary to help the efficient running of the Rugby Club; it is also important for the club to move its training to the Coventry area to help to integrate the Club into the local community, to give it identity and to help retain and recruit players and staff. The club want to develop its own training facility, where it can provide its staff and players with the quality and quantity of space and equipment necessary to compete at the highest level of domestic and European rugby. The club has not yet been able to bring forward a permanent new training facility but is committed to trying to move players and staff to the Coventry area by the start of the 2016/2017 pre-season. To achieve this, the club needs to provide a temporary solution before a permanent location can be delivered.
2.9 The facility at Broadstreet Rugby Club, on Rugby Road is extremely well placed and provides the opportunity for Wasps to deliver the quality of training facilities they require on a temporary basis. The site is well located close to Coventry and is accessible to the wider area with excellent access onto the A46. Its current use as a Rugby Club means that its use will not change and it is already set up for the uses Wasps require.

2.10 The current site consists of a large clubhouse, with extensive changing, shower and other backroom training facilities; bar, dining and canteen areas, with space for meetings and conferences; a large car parking area for at least 200 cars; 6 grass pitches, 2 floodlit and 4 unlit.

2.11 Agreement has been reached with Broadstreet Rugby Club to share their facilities on a temporary basis for up to 2 years. These arrangements would allow for the sharing of existing clubhouse facilities and the sharing of pitches. The sharing arrangements work well because the use of the facilities by Wasps will be at different times of the day and week than Broadstreet Rugby Club. As a professional club Wasps will use the facility on a weekday basis, with normal hours between 7.30am and 3.30pm, whereas Broadstreet Rugby Club use the facilities for training in the evening and matches at weekends.

2.12 Due to the facilities required to support a professional Rugby team, Wasps are proposing to construct temporary buildings together with the provision of a new artificial running track. The temporary building would accommodate a large gym and cardio-exercise area, treatment, rehabilitation and physiotherapy rooms, coaches meeting rooms, video analysis and player briefing areas, administration areas, toilets and kit rooms. The buildings would be single storey.

2.13 A normal training day would operate as follows:

- Players arrive for breakfast (around 7.30am) (players are required to eat individual and specialist diets);
- Players change and commence training;
- Depending on individual training requirements, players will work in the gym, cardio areas, on pitches or on the sprint track. Those with injuries will be treated;
- Players will then lunch;
- Further training will take place in the afternoon together with player briefing and video analysis;
- Most players will leave by 3.30pm;
- There are likely to be around 70 people on site during this time, including players, coaches, office staff and medical staff.
Embedding in the Community

2.14 As part of the Club’s relocation to Coventry it has always been the objective to have the training centre embedded in the local community. This will allow players to get more involved in visits to local schools and clubs and to help build the local fan base which is essential in order to fill the Ricoh week in, week out. Currently, with most players located close to the West London training centre, it is a two hour commute to attend school and club visits and the lack of player presence in the area is holding back the roll out of the community programme which is based in and around Coventry.

2.15 Currently having two separate locations also means that a number of staff are having to commute between both sites, Coventry and West London, to deal with matters such as media relations, human resources, finance etc and this makes the club inefficient and puts a strain on staff.

2.16 As part of the transition to the new training centre it is anticipated that players and support staff will relocate to Coventry and the surrounding area and a relocation service for staff is already in place.

Site Selection

2.17 As part of the site selection process, Wasps have examined a large number of potential sites in the Coventry and Warwickshire area with very few meeting criteria for development timescale, size, topography and known planning conditions.

2.18 Due to the specific requirements of the Rugby Club the majority of sites considered are located within the Green Belt. The Rugby Road site is considered the most appropriate temporary location due to the scale of existing facilities; accessibility and availability.
3.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Existing Site

3.1 The site is located on Rugby Road, Binley Woods, on the edge of Coventry. The site is currently occupied by Broadstreet Rugby Football Club. It contains a large clubhouse, ancillary buildings, extensive parking and 6 rugby pitches, two of which are flood lit.

3.2 The site lies in Rugby Borough and is located in the Green Belt. It is however in a relatively built-up area, with the A46 to its immediate west with commercial retail and other intensive uses beyond, residential development to the east and south along Rugby Road with open
areas to the north beyond the Rugby pitches. The site is also well contained to extensive tree and shrub planting on most of its boundaries.

The Proposal

3.3 Temporary buildings are proposed as an extension to the existing large clubhouse. These would be located to the north west of the existing building, adjacent to the A46 and away from open areas and residential properties. The buildings will be single storey, and although the gym would have extra height, the buildings would be lower than the existing clubhouse building and would therefore have little effect on the character of the site or wider area. The area where the buildings will be located are currently laid to grass, which is regularly mowed.

3.4 The proposals also include a new artificial running track positioned adjacent to the existing pitches, and the temporary change of use of the existing first floor caretakers flat.
3.5 The description of the development is:

Application for a temporary extension to the Ivor Preece Centre for use by Wasps Rugby Club as an interim facility; together with a temporary change of use of a residential flat to uses associated with the Wasps training facility.

3.6 The temporary buildings will be formed by combining a series of modular steel-framed units, manufactured off-site, then positioned to produce the required accommodation. The units will be raised above ground level, with access being via steps or a Part M compliant ramp. Where required, the units will be supported on masonry walls in facing brickworks to match the existing building. Drainage will be connected into the existing foul runs located around the Rugby club.

3.7 The gym unit will be constructed of Neptunus or similar temporary unit in insulated metal panels and coloured dark grey. The other buildings will be Portacabin units or similar in dark grey, but with the main entrance elevation dressed in vertical timber cladding, colour black with Wasps signage (see elevations).

3.8 The extension will accommodate:

- a gymnasium, cardio area and rehabilitation area;
- treatment room with, consulting rooms and physio office;
- coaches room;
- player briefing area;
- video analysis room;
- administration room';
- media area and interview room;
- toilets;
- kit room and laundry.

3.9 The extension is only required for a temporary two year period after which time the buildings will be removed together with the lower walls and foundations, and the area restored to its current condition.

3.10 The proposed artificial running track will be positioned adjacent to the existing pitches and consist of 4, 1.2m wide lanes, 60m long.

3.11 The existing clubhouse contains a caretaker’s flat on the first floor, see existing floor plans. It is proposed that this space is utilised by Wasps in association with their training facility for a temporary period. Only minor cosmetic changes are required to enable this temporary change of use.
4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan for the area consists of the Rugby Borough Council Core Strategy 2011 and the saved policies from the 2006 Local Plan.

4.2 The site is located within the Green Belt as defined in the Core Strategy proposals map. Policy CS1: Development Strategy states that development in the Green Belt will be resisted unless it accords with national policy on Green Belt (see below for analysis).

4.3 Policy CS16: Sustainable Design is also relevant. It sets out requirements for design quality, including the need for proposals to be of a scale, density and design that would not cause any material harm to the qualities, character and amenity of the areas in which they are situated. It also requires development to meet appropriate sustainability standards.

4.4 National policies are contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development and requires local authorities to positively seek to meet the development needs of their area. Section 8 of the NPPF identifies the importance of facilitating social interaction and creating healthy and inclusive communities. This includes the need to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services communities need.

4.5 Section 9 of the NPPF sets out the Government’s policies on the Green Belt. It explains that the Government attach great importance to Green Belts and that their essential characteristics are their openness and their permanence. There are 5 purposes of Green Belt. These are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

4.6 Paragraph 81 of the NPPF explains that, once identified, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt including looking

“to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation”.
4.7 The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is considered inappropriate, with a number of exceptions. Paragraph 89 defines the type of development that are not inappropriate. This includes:

- “provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building”.

5.0 APPRAISAL OF THE APPLICATION

5.1 The application proposals are for a temporary extension to an existing sports clubhouse for use by Wasps Rugby Club together with an artificial running track and a temporary change of use of part of the existing clubhouse currently used as a flat. The proposals are to assist with Wasps relocation to Coventry prior to the delivery of their own training ground and facilities. The proposal by Wasps is to share the facilities at the Ivor Preece Centre and agreement has been reached with Broadstreet Rugby Club.

5.2 The application is for temporary buildings to accommodate the facilities needed by a top flight rugby club, including gym, physio and treatment rooms, press rooms, player briefing and video analysis room, and support staff facilities. The buildings will be single storey and located to the north west of the existing clubhouse.

5.3 The new buildings are proposed to be located to the north west of the existing large clubhouse. In this location they are away from existing residential properties and well screened by the existing building and extensive landscape immediately around the site and in the wider area. The building will be designed to be subservient to the existing clubhouse and no parts of the new building will be higher than the existing building. As a result of the buildings scale and positioning it will not affect wider views into or around the site. They will be well contained and be read as part of the existing large clubhouse, and its associated car parking and ancillary buildings.

5.4 The site lies within the Coventry and Warwickshire Green Belt and in accordance with the Rugby Borough Council Core Strategy, falls to be considered against Green Belt policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The NPPF defines most new development in the Green Belt as inappropriate development and states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However the NPPF also identifies a number of forms of development which are not considered inappropriate development and which could therefore be acceptable development in the Green Belt. The application proposals relate to two of these forms of development.

These are:

1. the “provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport”“…as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”;

and

2. “the extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building”.
5.5 The application proposals would accord with these criteria.

5.6 In terms of the first form of development the proposals accord with it because they are for the provision of facilities for outdoor sport, would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with Green Belt purpose as explained above. Given the position of the proposed buildings, their height and scale, and given the immediate context to the site and the wider landscape setting, the proposals will not impact on the general openness of the Green Belt in the area. Equally the proposals, again due to their scale, location and relationship with existing built development, will not conflict with any of the purpose of including land within the Green Belt.

5.7 In terms of the second form of development listed, the proposals accord with it because they form an extension and alteration to an existing building and given the scale and form of the existing clubhouse and associated outbuildings and hardstanding, relative to the scale of the proposed extension, it is considered that the scheme would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The change of use would clearly not result in any additional built form.

5.8 The temporary and unique nature of the proposals are also directly relevant material considerations which weigh in the balance of the considerations set out above and also weigh, on their own, in favour of the application. The proposals seek to help facilitate the relocation of Wasps Rugby Club to the Coventry area. The Club have already moved to the Ricoh Arena where they now play their first team matches. Training however still takes place in London and this is inefficient for the Club and a constraint on the aspirations of the Club to become embedded in the local community and to build a fan base. The relocation of training to the Coventry area will bring economic and social benefits. It will allow the relocation of staff and players on a permanent basis, to the area. It will also allow direct community interaction, including with local schools and clubs as a result of players and staff being based in the area. Currently players and coaching staff spend most of their working week at the training ground and are unable to develop links with the local community given the travel distances involved (from London to Coventry).

5.9 For the reasons set out it is considered that the proposals fully accord with the Development Plan and relevant National Planning Policy and should therefore be approved.
6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Wasps Rugby Club for a planning application for temporary training facilities at Rugby Road, Binley Woods. The site is located on the edge of Coventry but within Rugby Borough.

6.2 Wasps Rugby Club recently moved to Coventry and are now based, and play their first team games, at the Ricoh Arena. However the Club currently still train in London and are looking to move their team training to the Coventry area. A permanent location has not yet been identified and the Club need to utilise facilities on a temporary basis until a permanent location is found.

6.3 The site on Rugby Road is currently home to Broadstreet Rugby Football Club. It contains a large changing and function building together with a range of pitches and training areas. An agreement has been reached between Wasps and Broadstreet Rugby Football Club to share facilities on a temporary basis. New temporary buildings are proposed on the site to provide the facilities necessary to support a top flight Rugby team, together with a new running track.

6.4 The description of the development is:

Application for a temporary extension to the Ivor Preece Centre for use by Wasps Rugby Club as an interim training facility; together with a temporary change of use of part of the existing building currently used as a residential flat to uses associated with the Wasps training facility, and the provision of an artificial running track.

6.5 The extension will accommodate:

- a gymnasium, cardio area and rehabilitation area;
- treatment room with, consulting rooms and physio office;
- coaches room;
- player briefing area;
- video analysis room;
- administration room;
- media area and interview room;
- toilets;
- kit room and laundry.

6.6 The site lies within the Coventry and Warwickshire Green Belt and in accordance with the Rugby Borough Council Core Strategy, falls to be considered against Green Belt policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The NPPF defines most new development in the Green Belt as inappropriate development and states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However the NPPF also identifies a number of forms of development which are not considered inappropriate development and which could therefore be acceptable
development in the Green Belt. The application proposals relate to two of these forms of development.

These are:

- “the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport”......"as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it";

and

- “the extension or alteration of a building providing it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building”.

6.7 The application proposals would accord with of these criteria.

6.8 The temporary and unique nature of the proposals are also directly relevant material considerations which weigh in the balance of the considerations and also weigh, on their own, in favour of the application. The proposals seek to help facilitate the relocation of Wasps Rugby Club to the Coventry area. The Club have already moved to the Ricoh Arena where they now play their first team matches. The relocation of training to the Coventry area will bring economic and social benefits. It will allow the relocation of staff and players on a permanent basis, to the area. It will also allow direct community interaction, including with local schools and clubs as a result of players and staff being based in the area. Currently players and coaching staff spend most of their working week at the training ground and are unable to develop links with the local community given the travel distances involved (from London to Coventry).

6.9 It is therefore concluded that the proposals accord with the relevant local and national policies and planning permission should be granted.