



PLANNING STATEMENT TO ACCOMPANY APPLICATION FOR PROPOSED PITCH IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAYING FIELDS AT FELINFACH, CEREDIGION.



PROJECT OUTLINE

This planning statement is to accompany the above full planning permission application, for the proposed pitch improvements to the playing fields at 'Felinfach Playing Fields'. The aim of the proposal is to achieve a level playing field, by undergoing a cut and fill construction method to remove the existing mound from the centre of the pitch, whilst also installing a bypass drainage system below the playing field to improve the overall playability condition of the pitch, which in-turn will ensure that the pitch is able to be maintained to a higher standard throughout the course of the playing season. These improvements will result in the proposed finished pitch to conform to performance quality standards set out by the Football Association in Wales, who have been imperative to this proposal from inception, given that the club have secured grant funding under the 'Cymru Football Foundations Fit For Future' projects for the improvements to the pitch.

CLUB OUTLINE

Currently, the club runs four senior teams (three mens, one womens) as well as a thriving junior system that features a team at every age group from U-6s to U-16s. It also offers community initiatives such as the FAW Huddle, which encourages young girls to get into the sport and underlines the club's renowned commitment to championing women's football.

Over 20 years since the club's 'golden age' in the mid-to-late 90s, recent seasons have yielded significant and unprecedented on-and-off-pitch success for the club. The men's first team won the prestigious Cwpan Coffa Dai Dynamo and recorded its highest-ever Ceredigion Division 1 finish in the 2023/24 season, harbouring ambitions to rise up the Cymru League system, while the U-19 side has clinched back-to-back Ceredigion Youth Cup titles and the junior system has gone from strength to strength.



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Last year, the club also attained Platinum accreditation from the FAW – the highest level of accreditation possible for grassroots clubs – and is one of only four Central Wales clubs to achieve the feat. The accreditation has recently been revalidated for the 2024/25 season and is testament to the immense volunteer-based work and strong foundations in place at the club.

CPD Felinfach is home to one of the best junior football tournaments in the region as well. It features over 100 junior teams over a two-day weekend every April, welcoming clubs and players from all over Ceredigion and the wider west Wales region to participate in a festival of football for all age groups and genders.

SITE OVERVIEW

The site of application for the above proposal is located within the inland village of Felinfach, which is positioned centrally within Ceredigion. The playing fields are located to the south easterly side of the village, along the A482 main road towards Lampeter. The existing site is afforded with a tarmacked entrance off the main road, leading to a hardcore parking area for visitors. The existing facilities within the site comprise of a changing room building, which includes separate rooms for both the home and away teams, a small tea and coffee preparation kitchen, along with male and female toilets accessible by spectators watching any one of the multitude of teams at Felinfach Football Club. There is also a storage shed adjacent, to house Felinfach football clubs' equipment, such as goals, footballs and kit. Within the existing boundaries of the site, there is currently one football pitch located centrally which is used by all age groups all year-round. The remaining free space around the pitch is utilised during training sessions and also the younger age groups within the club. In addition to the football facilities on offer, there is a small park to the western side of the site, which includes a swing. All of these amenities are easily accessible to the community of Felinfach via either the public footpaths up to the site along the A482 main road, or the accesses from Bro Henllys estate, as well as the excellent public transport links via the bus stop located some hundred meters away.

Within Ceredigion's Local Development Plan (LDP), the village of Felinfach is considered a Rural Service Centre (RSC), and is therefore seen to provide the population of the village and its surrounding settlements with their day-to-day needs. As taken from the LDP, "*Felinfach and Ystrad Aeron are located in the Aeron Valley on the A482. It is located 10.6km (6.5 miles) from Aberaeron and 10.8km (6.7 miles) from Lampeter. Although counted as one Rural Service Centre (RSC) the centre is formed of two distinct villages that when considered jointly accounts for more than approximately 150 dwellings, providing access to a good range of facilities and services, including a primary school (capacity for 54 pupils), general store/post office, public house, garage, village hall, a place of worship, playing fields and children's play area.*" This description of Felinfach, identifying its array of amenities, establishes its importance as a rural service centre to the surrounding inhabitants that it serves. It is particularly important to note that the playing fields in question related to this application are mentioned within this local development, as seen above, which portrays the importance of its role within the community.



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EXISTING PLAYING FIELD CONDITION

Prior to putting together a proposal to improve the pitch at Felinfach playing fields, it has firstly been imperative to determine the condition of the existing pitch. Upon first inspection, it is apparent that the pitch is far from level in all directions. The western side of the pitch is higher than the eastern, closest to the road, as well as a notable crown in the middle of the pitch which tapers off to the sides. As well as this, it has been noted that the drainage of the existing pitch is poor, which leads to certain areas becoming waterlogged and therefore more susceptible to damage and resulting in games and training sessions being cancelled.

To gain a greater understanding of the downfall of the existing pitch, a feasibility study by Alan Lewis Ltd Sports Surface Consultant and Groundstaff Mentor has been completed, as well as a topographical survey of the site as a whole. Within the contents of the feasibility study, the above points regarding the slope of the pitch, as well as the drainage through the soil of the pitch were highlighted as significant issues. Data taken from the topographical survey identifies that the levels on the pitch range between a 1% and 5% gradient, which are outside of performance guidelines. Along with this downfall, upon completing a soil investigation of the pitch it was identified that “Topsoil texture was classed as a heavy clay loam made up of 26% sand, 46% silt and 28% clay; the subsoil was a heavy silt clay loam made up of 14% sand, 54% silt and 32% clay”. The investigation goes on to highlight that “once clay contents exceed approximately 30%, they can significantly and adversely affect the rate at which water can percolate through the profile. Given that the clay content of the subsoil is 32%, it is expected that drainage rates through this material may be affected”. To conclude the findings from this investigation, the existing pitch is in need of being improved to bring it up to the aspirations of the club and community.

THE PROPOSAL

Following the findings from the feasibility study, topographical survey and consultations held with Felinfach Football Club, it is apparent that a proposal to improvement the existing pitch to bring it up to performance quality standards is imperative, to ensure that the club continues to provide a vital amenity to the local community of Dyfryn Aeron for generations to come. These aspirations by the club have been supported by the Football Association of Wales (FAW), which is identified through the approved secured grant funding of up to £300,000 to provide the pitch improvements, under the ‘Cymru Football Foundations Fit For Future’ projects.

The works proposed to be completed to bring the existing pitch and surrounding training areas up to the performance quality standards include a mostly ‘cut and fill’ procedure of the existing site, which will include the removal of the crown of earth from the centre of the pitch and to then relocate this to the sides of the pitch to provide a level playing field. These works will involve the creation of tapered embankments to shallow gradients of 1:3 around the pitch, as seen on the accompanied drawings, to ensure that the pitch is safely accessible by anyone using or attending the facility. Upon the completion of the levelling of the pitch, drainage pipes will be laid below ground to the area of the proposed pitch to specified engineers’ calculations. This will allow for any rain that falls directly onto the pitch to be drained away to a sustainable soakaway within the site, which will ensure that the condition of the pitch is retained to a high standard during the wetter winter months. This would



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be a drastic improvement in comparison to the existing pitch, where there are often very wet patches and even standing water, which interferes on games and training sessions for all teams and age groups. Finally, laid on top of the drainage pipes, will be a new topsoil build up as specified and constructed by a specialist sports contractor, which will provide a quality surface for the club and community to utilise for many years to come.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Prior to the submission of this full planning application, a pre-application advice enquiry was submitted to the council to gather further guidance and consultation into the feasibility of the project. Given the nature of the project being to upgrade the existing community facility, the response from the pre-application advice deemed that the application would likely be viewed favourably by the the local planning authority.

Ceredigion County Councils Local Development Plan, Volume 1, Strategy and Policies 2007-2022 sets out all planning policies that are to be considered with developments throughout the county. Through the information provided within this LDP, the following policies are relevant to the proposed development:

- S01 Sustainable Growth
- S03 Development in Rural Service Centres (RSCs)
- LU22 Community Provision
- DM06 High Quality Design and Placemaking
- DM13 Sustainable Drainage Systems
- DM14 Nature Conservation and Ecological Connectivity
- DM15 Local Biodiversity Conservation
- DM17 General Landscape
- DM18 Special Landscape Areas
- DM20 Protection of Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands
- DM22 General Environmental Protection and Enhancement

S01 - SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Growth will be focused to deliver stronger, more sustainable communities and this will be achieved by providing opportunity for development as follows:

1. Approximately 6544 dwellings in order to meet the projected growth of 6000 units (detailed Table 6.1). This will be achieved in a sustainable manner through the following distribution:

a. Atleast 51% in the Urban Service Centres in line with Policy S02 on allocated sites as set out in Appendix 2, the Settlement Group Statements and shown on the Proposals Map and on 'windfall sites';

b. 24% in the Rural Service Centres on allocated sites asset out in Appendix 2, the Settlement Group Statements and shown on the Proposals Map in line with Policy S03; and

c. A maximum of 25% (or in any event no more than 1522 units) in the 'Linked Settlements and Other Locations' on non-allocated sites in line with Policy S04.13



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2. *Employment opportunities to provide for 4000 jobs across the County in a sustainable manner in line with Policies S02, S03 and S04, either on:*
 - a. *The 39hectares (net) allocated land (23ha Aberystwyth Area and 16 ha in the Cardigan Area) as set out in the Settlement Group Statements and shown on the Proposals Map; or*
 - b. *Sites that have not been allocated in accordance with policies LU11-LU21.*
 3. *Other types of development on allocated sites as set out in the Settlement Group Statements and shown on the Proposals Map and also on sites that have not been allocated provided in accordance with Plan Policy.*
- In delivering this growth, the County's environment and resources are protected and enhanced.*

As identified within the site overview of this statement, the site of application for this proposal is to the existing playing fields located within the Rural Service Centre of Felinfach. Policy S01 identifies that growth should be located primarily within service centres to ensure that each development is sustainable. This is mostly achieved given the ease of access via main roads for either private vehicles or public transportation, along with the ability to use the array of amenities present within a service centre. Given that the site is located within a rural service centre, it is deemed as sustainable and therefore complies with policy S01.

S03 - DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SERVICE CENTRE

Focusing development in Rural Service Centres will improve the sustainability of rural areas and therefore development will be permitted as follows in the Rural Service Centre:

1. *Housing development in accordance with the Settlement Group Statement and other policies of the Plan, both in terms of:*
 - a. *allocated sites (see Settlement Group Statement and Proposals Map) up to the housing provision levels set out in Appendix 2 (column b); and*
 - b. *'windfall'sites;*
2. *Employment development in accordance with the Settlement Group Statement and other policies of the Plan, both in terms of allocated sites (see Settlement Group Statement and Proposals Map) and on sites that have not been allocated. Development on sites that have not been allocated should be no greater than 'medium' in scale;*
3. *Retail development only where it provides opportunities for an improved choice of convenience goods; and*
4. *Other development types which will support the Rural Service Centre's function in line with the Settlement Group Statement.*

Additionally, all housing development must come forward within the defined settlement boundary illustrated on the Proposals Map, other than rural exception sites (see Policy S05 Affordable Housing). Other uses which come forward adjacent to the settlement boundary will be permitted, provided they accord with other Plan policies and where it has been demonstrated that there is no suitable location available within the boundary.

Similarly to policy S01, policy S03 focuses on the sustainability of each development and where it is located. Policy S03 is tailored specifically for Rural Service Centres (RSCs), and therefore is an applicable policy to this application given that the site of application lays within the Rural Service



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Centre of Felinfach. As viewable in the policy, point 4 states that 'other development types will support the Rural Service Centres function in line with the Settlement Group Statement'. As taken from the Local Development Plans settlement group statements, which is included in the 'site overview' section above, the playing fields of Felinfach are directly mentioned within the statement. This mention highlights the importance of the playing fields to the surrounding community, and therefore provides a direct indicator that they do in fact support the function of the rural service centre, which confirms that this development conforms to policy S03.

LU22 - COMMUNITY PROVISION

The LDP will help sustain and enhance community provision by:

1. Supporting the development of new sustainable community provision, provided that:

- i. They are located within or adjoining a settlement;*
- ii. The planning application demonstrates that the feasibility of multi-use has been considered;*
- iii. No suitable facility exists nearby which could appropriately accommodate the proposed use; and*
- iv. where the proposal is for a facility being relocated, it can be demonstrated that the existing site is no longer suitable for that use.*

2. Resisting the loss or change of use of an existing community provision unless:

- i. Alternative provision of at least equivalent local community value can be provided either within or adjoining the settlement or other settlements which are part of the Settlement Group. In relation to open space specifically, the alternative should be an enhanced provision which is preferably located within close proximity to the existing provision.*
 - ii. It can be demonstrated that existing level of community provision is inappropriate or surplus to the community needs of that settlement or Settlement Group; or*
 - iii. The current use has ceased to be viable and no other community use can be viably established.*
- A report will need to be submitted with any planning application for the change of use or loss of facility explaining why the loss or change of use is justifiable.*

As policy LU22 highlights the importance of communal spaces within settlement groups, this proposal has direct relevance to the policy. Within section two of the policy, which expands of the change of existing community provision, it is stated that an alternative proposal should provide an enhanced provision for the community, and should also be located within close proximity to the existing provision. Given that the proposal as part of this application is to greatly improve the existing community playing fields within the same site of application, the proposal complies with the above policy.

DM06 – HIGH QUALITY DESIGN AND PLACEMAKING

Development should have full regard, and positively contribute to the context of its location and surroundings. Development should reflect a clear understanding of design principles, the local physical, social, economic and environmental context.



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Policy DM06 holds great importance within the local development plan and its policies, as it has been written to ensure that each proposal fits in within not only the close proximity, but also the county's vernacular as a whole, ensure that the new development positively contributes the surrounding. As this application is to simply improve the existing pitch facilities at Felinfach football fields, with very minor visual changes, there will be little to no impact in terms of policy DM06. This is justified given that the proposed works are only to include the cut and fill of the existing pitch, with most of the works consisting of removing the existing crown from the centre of the pitch and relocating it to the side of the pitch. The difference in build-up will be tapered back down to the existing ground levels at a shallow gradient of 1 in 3, and will therefore provide very little change in appearance, especially from onlooking locations such as the road and adjoining housing estates. In addition to the proposed works to the level of the pitch, there will be no change of use on the site, along with no removal of existing natural features. The combination of these factors confirm that the proposal complies with policy DM06.

DM13 – SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

In addition to requirements set out by national guidance, development will be permitted provided that:

- 1. Where a site is being developed on a plot-by-plot basis a scheme for an appropriate SUDS for the entire site is put forward as part of the first application;*
- 2. If the site is capable of being extended at a future date it should not be developed in such a way that future SUDS systems cannot be implemented;*
- 3. Non-residential development of 500m² or more is accompanied by a SUDS that is capable of being adopted by the SUDS Approving Body; and*
- 4. A management scheme is submitted detailing the maintenance of the SUDS scheme.*

If SUDS cannot be implemented a full written justification should be submitted explaining why this is the case.

Prior to the commencement of any works on the proposal to improve the existing playing fields, the SUDS department within the council was contacted in relation to the requirement of an application due to the works. The received response was as follows: "As the surface material is still permeable, SAB approval will not be required as the drainage implications will not change." Although it is confirmed that a SUDS scheme will not be required for the approval of this application, the intention of the football club is to install a bypass drainage system below the new surface of the pitch, and discharge the water to a sustainable soakaway to the north east of the pitch to ensure that during the wetter months the pitch is no longer prone to standing water and poor drainage capacity.

DM14 – NATURE CONSERVATION AND ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY

Development will be permitted where it protects and, where possible, enhances biodiversity, geodiversity and ecological connectivity across Ceredigion, including local sites and local priority species and habitats.

Where it is appropriate to the scale and location of the development and opportunities exist, development should incorporate nature conservation education and access, providing the site's ecological or geological integrity can be safeguarded.



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Given that the aim of the application is to simply level the existing grassed area where the pitch currently sits, and then re-lay the turf, there will be no removal of biodiversity from the site. As highlighted within the accompanied 'Green Infrastructure Statement', there will in fact be an enhancement in biodiversity as part of the application, with the inclusion of a bird and bat box to be affixed to the mature trees to the south of the site.

DM15 – LOCAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Development will be permitted where:

- 1. A step-wise approach is adopted to ensure there will be no significant negative effects to biodiversity and ecological connectivity both on-site and off-site;*
- 2. Appropriate species, habitats and wildlife corridor/stepping stone enhancements have been incorporated into the development through good landscape and building design, or where applicable will be carried out offsite;*
- 3. With regard to developments affecting LNRs, sites that meet SINC criteria and priority species and habitats, there is an overriding social, economic or environmental need for the development that outweighs the losses to biodiversity (after mitigation), the development could not reasonably be located elsewhere and these losses can be readily and fully compensated within the local area; and*
- 4. Where necessary, management plans are produced and agreed with the LPA and developments phased to take into account mitigation and compensation measures.*

Where policies DM14 and DM15 are very similar in terms of their aims to retain biodiversity within a site, policy DM15 is most comparable to guidance provided within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) regarding the conservation of biodiversity. Chapter 6 of PPW now requires every planning application to be accompanied by a Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS), which highlights the need to improve the biodiversity throughout Wales by making small improvements to each individual application. Within the accompanied GIS for this application, it is identified that the proposal includes a biodiversity net gain in the form of the installation of a bird and bat box to the mature trees to the south of the site. Please see accompanied GIS for more detail on this policy.

DM17 GENERAL LANDSCAPE

Development will be permitted provided that it does not have a significant adverse effect on the qualities and special character of the visual, historic, geological, ecological or cultural landscapes and seascapes of Ceredigion, the National Parks and surrounding area by:

- 1. causing significant visual intrusion;*
- 2. being insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape;*
- 3. introducing or intensifying a use which is incompatible with its location;*
- 4. failing to harmonise with, or enhance the landform and landscape; and /or*
- 5. losing or failing to incorporate important traditional features, patterns, structures and layout of settlements and landscapes.*

Where possible development should enhance these qualities and special character.



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As described previously in this statement, along with the accompanied drawings, the proposed development is to improve the standard of the existing pitch facilities at Felinfach playing fields. Given that the use of the site will remain the same, the visual appearance will barely be altered, and there will be no removal of natural features it is believed that the general landscape will remain the same and therefore complies with the above policy.

DM18 – SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Proposals for development within Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) will be assessed in relation to scale and nature of development and their ability to be accommodated without significant damage to, and where possible the enhancement of, the valued visual, historic, geological, ecological and cultural characteristics of the SLA.

Policy DM18 relates to designated Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) around Ceredigion, of which, this site of application lies within the Aeron Valley Special Landscape Area. Due to this, it is important that key management issues are in place to retain the importance of the landscape. As there will be little visual impact, given the minimal works proposed, along with no removal of natural features, the application is seen to comply with the above policy.

DM20 – PROTECTION OF TREES, HEDGEROWS AND WOODLANDS

Development will be permitted providing:

- 1. it would not remove, damage or destroy trees, hedgerows or woodlands of visual, ecological, historic, cultural or amenity value unless the need of the proposed development outweighs these values;*
- 2. it is able to mitigate or if necessary compensate for any negative impacts of the loss or damage;*
- 3. it would achieve appropriate biodiversity gain; and*
- 4. compensation and enhancement measures are mainly native species of local provenance and are not non-native invasive species.*

There will be no removal or damage to any existing trees or hedgerows as part of the proposal and therefore the application complies with policy DM20.

DM22 – GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

In order to help achieve environmental protection and enhancement, proposed development will be permitted provided that:

- 1. It protects and enhances where possible air, soil and the water environment and safeguards water resources, both on and off site;*
- 2. It does not have a significant adverse effect on noise and light levels, both on and off site;*
- 3. A step-wise approach is adopted to ensure that it does not have a significant adverse effect on natural processes and ecosystem services, both on and off site, and, where possible, seeks to restore, achieve favourable condition of or enhance associated features;*
- 4. Any land reclamation, capping of works associated with the restoration or the development of derelict metal mines results in minimum intervention and is:*



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- a. essential to eliminate a pollution threat; or*
- b. essential safety works; and*
- c. specifically intended to educate, promote, protect or preserve the mines remains.*
- 5. Any land affected by instability is accompanied by evidence which illustrates that:*
 - a. development will not result in instability of neighbouring properties; and*
 - b. any works that are required to stabilise the site do not have a significant adverse impact on the environment.*

Given the nature of the proposed application being for the levelling of the existing pitch, along with the installation of a bypass drainage system, it is believed that there will be little to no impact on the environment and its surrounding, as there will be no removal of natural features, there will be no additional noise or light creation and upon completion the site will remain as the same use as currently present. In creating a level pitch, there will be the requirement to construct some shallow embankments at a gradient of 1 in 3 to taper back to the existing ground levels, which will enable the site to be accessed and used safely by anyone playing on or attending the site. Due to these reasons, the existing environment is protected.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion to the above statement for the proposed pitch improvements to the playing fields at 'Felinfach Playing Fields', which will include the levelling of the existing pitch, along with the inclusion of a bypass drainage scheme below the new surface, it is believed that all relevant planning policies have been taken account of, resulting in a compliant proposal that should be looked upon favourably by Ceredigion's planning department. The improvements will provide the already well established football club with improved facilities up to performance quality standards, which will not only enable the club to strive for higher aspirations, but also provide the surrounding community with an improved facility that can be enjoyed for years to come.



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