

Planning Statement

For Build a Future Ltd | 23-120

Erection of outdoor climbing tower and associated equipment for Build a Future School,
Louth Road, West Ashby, Lincolnshire, LN9 5PT

Project: 23-120
Site Address: Main Street, Horncastle, West Ashby, Lincolnshire, LN9 5PT
Client: Build a Future Ltd
Date: 16 October 2023
Author: Sarah Sands
Approved by: Caroline Payne

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Appendices

- EP1.** Photographs of the site
- EP2.** LPA pre-application advice letter dated 9 June 2023



1. Introduction

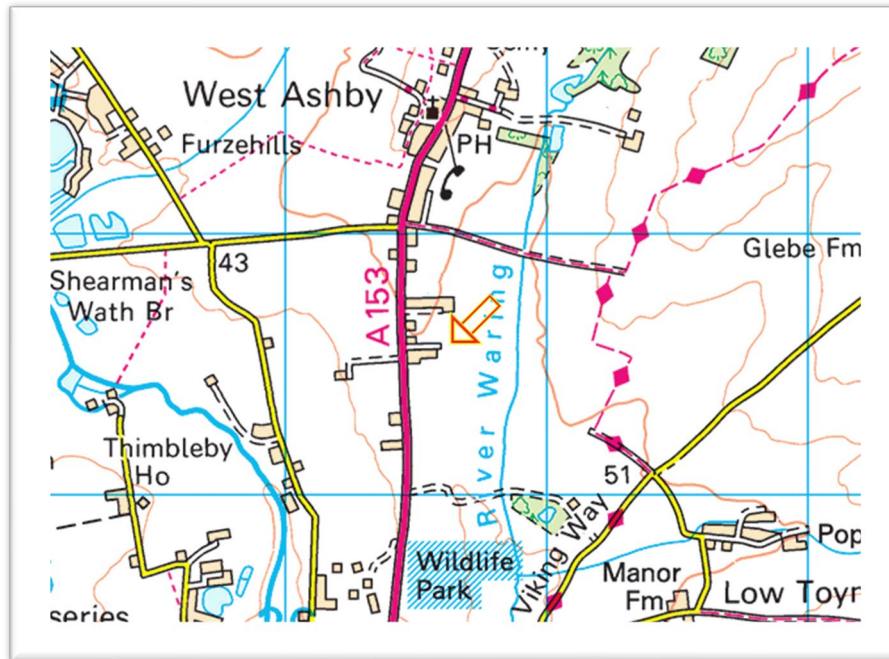
- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of Build a Future Limited, to accompany a full planning application for the erection of a climbing tower and associated equipment at 'Build a Future' Independent School, Main Street, West Ashby, Lincolnshire, LN9 5PT.
- 1.2 This application follows the receipt of positive pre-application advice from the local authority for this proposal. Further details are provided in Section 3 of this statement.
- 1.3 Build a Future Limited is part of the Keys Group who are the leading providers of specialist education, residential care and supported living services. Build a Future provides independent education supporting pupils with special educational needs. Further information on the applicant is set out in Section 3 of this statement.
- 1.4 This statement will demonstrate that the proposal complies with policies in the development plan and national planning policy and guidance. Therefore, confirmation is sought that, should an application be submitted, planning permission would be approved in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 1.5 In addition, the positive health benefits that would be gained by pupils is a material consideration that should be given significant weight in the assessment of the proposal. Further details are provided in this statement.



2. Context

Site location and description

- 2.1 The site is located in the countryside to the south of the village of West Ashby and approximately 1.2km to the north of Horncastle, as indicated on the extract from Street Map below.



Extract from Street Map

- 2.2 The site of Build a Future School occupies an area of some 1.1 hectares in total; it lies to the rear of two, detached bungalows that front onto the main road, Horncastle Road. Access to 'Build a Future Education' is obtained via a shared driveway to the north of one of the bungalows. The subject site is screened from view from the main road by high, boundary hedges.
- 2.3 To the north of the site there are a couple of residential properties and a poultry farm. To the east and south, the site is surrounded by agricultural fields. There are no residential properties in close proximity to the west of the site. Extracts from Google Earth are provided below.





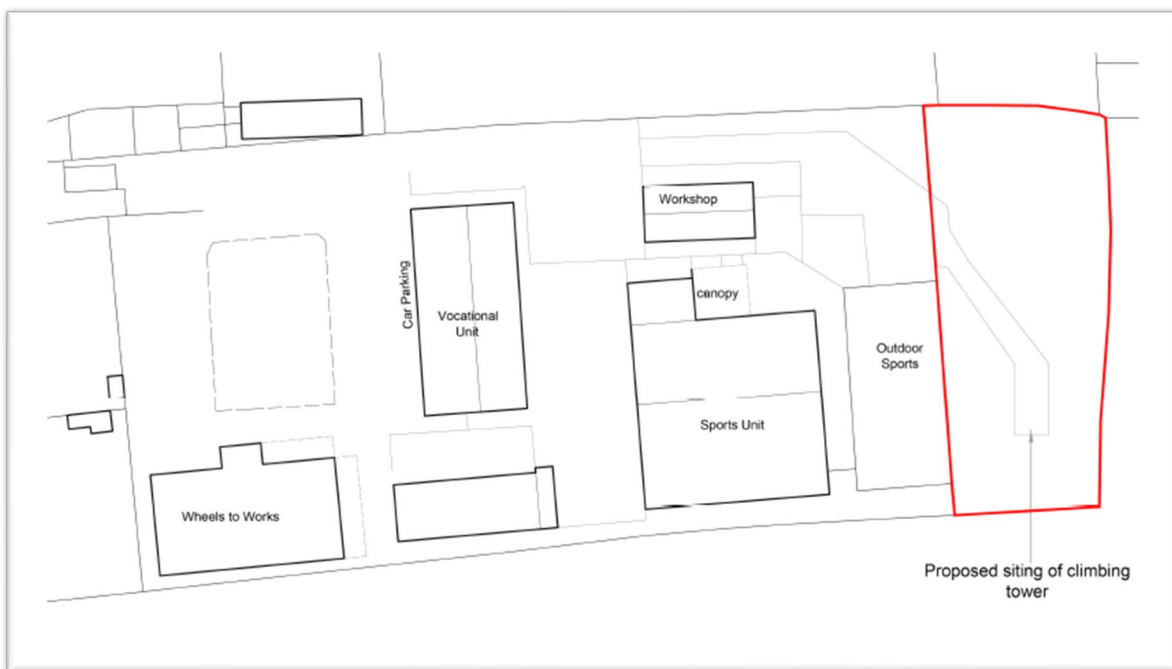
Extract from Google Earth dated 2020



Enlarged version of Google Earth image showing the school site



- 2.4 The site comprises a large area of hardstanding and originally, former agricultural buildings were converted into a youth training centre. The site is now used for education purposes by the applicant and has been so used since planning permission was granted in 2009.
- 2.5 At the rear of the buildings there is a fenced playground. Beyond this is a grassed area that is overgrown; this is the application site. The hardstanding is still visible and can be seen in the photographs of the site, attached at Appendix EP1.
- 2.6 The concrete slab was constructed as the base for a mobile classroom, following the granting of planning permission in 2020; the area of hardstanding is set down at a lower level than the surrounding land. This is the area where the climbing tower would be constructed.
- 2.7 Photographs of the site are attached at Appendix EP1.
- 2.8 An extract from the submitted site plan is enclosed below.



Extract from site plan

Background to the applicant

- 2.9 Build a Future was founded 18 years ago and the company moved to the West Ashby premises 10 years ago. Build a Future provides education for young people, boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 years with special educational needs including SEMD, ASD, MLD.
- 2.10 The company has a positive relationship with Lincolnshire Learning Community ensuring the best outcomes for all young people. Pupils benefit from this type of provision that provides a small supportive school environment that differs to mainstream education. Pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan in place.
- 2.11 The school is open Monday to Friday between 0900 and 1445 hours, during term-time only.



Planning History

The planning history for the whole of the Build a Future site is summarised below.

Build a Future – application site

- Application ref: S/201/02011/20 – Siting of a cabin to provide a classroom. The location of the classroom is on the land that is the subject of this application. The application was approved on 07/12/2020 and this permission has been implemented. The officer's report confirms the use of the whole site as an independent school.
- It should be noted that the council's pre-application advice recognises that the site has *'...become firmly established as an education facility.'*

Build a Future – the school site

- Application ref: S/201/00510/12 – Change of use, conversion of, extension and alterations to existing building used for workshops, classrooms and offices to use for moped repair workshops, classroom, stores, offices, interview room, reception, rest room and w.c.'s, for Build a Future. Approved 15/06/2012.
- Application ref: S/201/00345/12 – non-material amendment to planning permission ref: S/201/00964/04. Approved 15/03/2012.
- Application ref: S/201/01968/10 – non-material amendment to planning permission ref: S/201/01010/10. Approved 18/10/2010.
- Application ref: S/201/01010/10 – erection of a single-storey building with link to existing adjoining building comprising a lobby, storage area, an indoor sports/gym facilities with first aid room, toilets, changing rooms, sauna and steam room and a vehicle service/repair facility with kitchen, toilet, office and reception area, in accordance with amended plans. Approved 22/07/2010.
- Application ref: S/201/02757/09 - to relocate and continue to site 2 no. portable buildings used for offices/classrooms which were granted a temporary consent under planning permission reference S/201/00633/07. Approved on 02/02/2010.
- Application ref: S/201/00313/09 - Change of use, conversion of, extension and alterations to existing store building to use as workshops, classrooms, office, entrance/reception area and w.c.'s. Planning permission was granted on 06/04/2009, subject to conditions.



- Application ref: S/201/00633/07 – Planning permission to continue to use land for the siting of 3 no. portable buildings and 1 no static caravan. Approved 03/05/2007.
- Application ref: S/201/00964/04 - Change of use, conversion of and alterations to existing poultry house into a vocational training building with classrooms and training areas (building no.1), change of use, conversion of, extensions and alterations to existing agricultural building to house an indoor sports pitch, changing rooms, canteen, stores, classrooms, meeting area, office, reception, toilets, gym and recreation area (building no.2), change of use, conversion of and alterations to existing agricultural building to use as a workshop (building no.3), to use existing concrete base as an outdoor sports pitch (building no.4), change of use of existing pole barn to use for the storage of building materials (building no.5), all to be used in connection with proposed youth training centre and buildings no's 6 and 7 to remain unaltered and unused, erection of fencing 2.4 metres in height and provision of car parking. Approved 06/08/2004.

Wheels to Work (previous occupants of site)

- Application ref: S/201/00759/13 - Change of use of existing tarmac area to be used for moped training purposes for Wheels to Work. Refused 27/06/2013.
- Application ref: S/201/1791/13 - Change of use of existing tarmac area to be used for moped training purposes, in accordance with amended site plan, for Wheels to Work. Approved 21/01/2014.

Pre-application consultation

- 2.12 Prior to the submission of this application, pre-application advice was sought from the council. The purpose of the enquiry was twofold. Firstly, to establish whether the local planning authority accepted the principle of development, taking into consideration the positive benefits that pupils would gain from using the outdoor equipment and, secondly, to obtain any comments on the details of the proposed equipment.
- 2.13 The local authority's response is set out in their advice letter dated 9 June. A copy is attached at Appendix EP2. The letter states as follows:

“Clearly the established use of the site and the benefits the proposal would offer weigh in the planning balance. The proposed development being sited to the rear of the site and the distance and intervening features that offers between the tower and neighbours, combined with the nature of the use of the tower would lessen its impact on neighbours and visually on the wider area. Having regard for this, it is my view that the proposal would gain officer support should an application be submitted.”



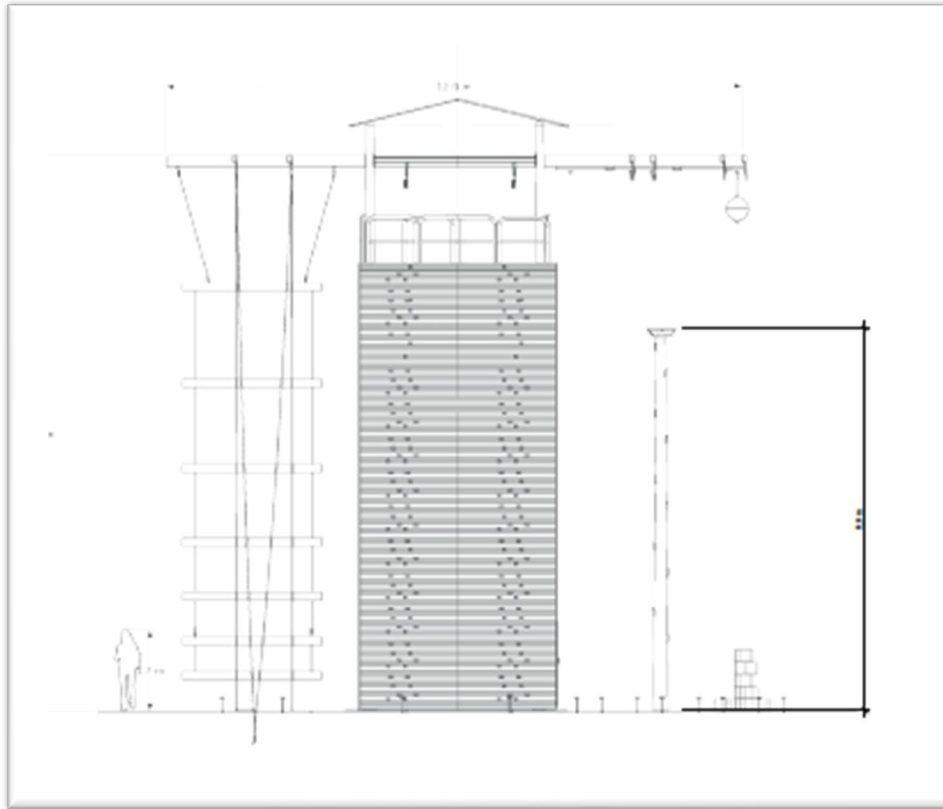
2.14 This submission is made following the positive pre-application advice and on the basis that no changes were required to be made to the proposal.



3. The application

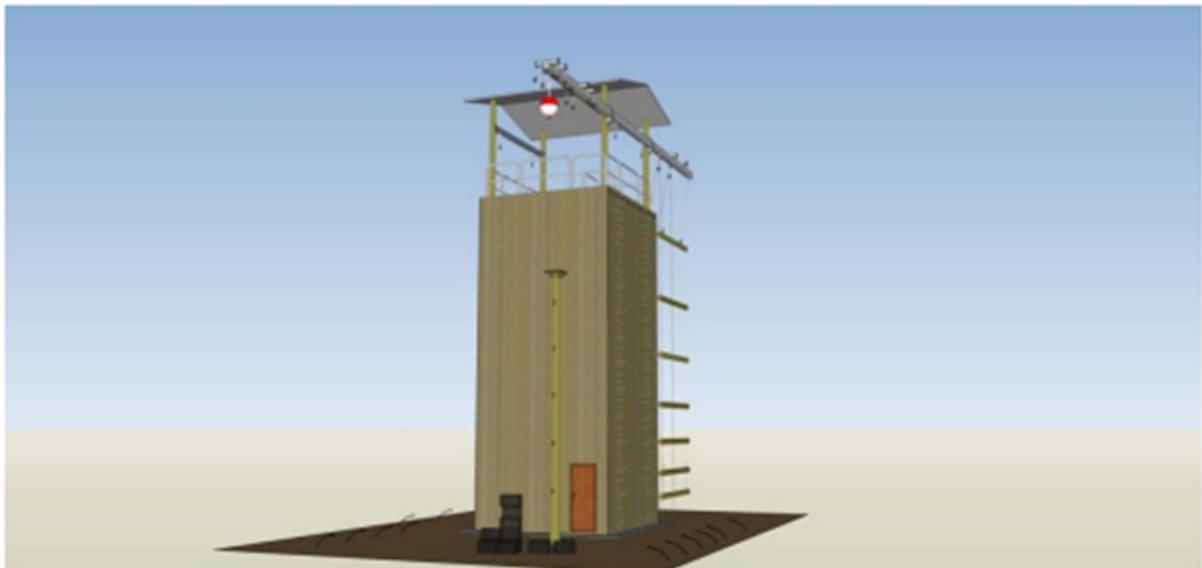
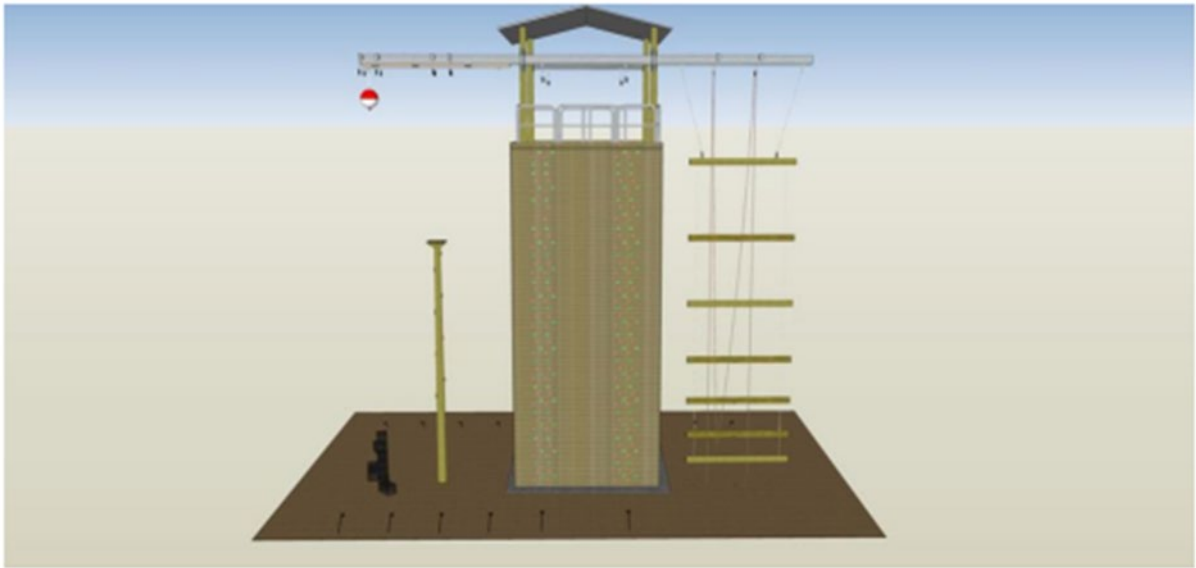
- 3.1 The application proposal comprises the construction of a climbing tower with associated equipment at Build a Future School, to enhance existing outdoor activities to improve the physical educational experience of pupils.
- 3.2 The climbing tower would be sited on an existing area of hardstanding located at the rear of the school site, beyond existing buildings and close to the eastern (rear) boundary of the site, as shown on the submitted proposed site plan.
- 3.3 The main part of the tower would be solid in its appearance and constructed from timber with artificial climbing holds on external surfaces. The tower would measure 12m in height from the ground to the eaves of the roof over the platform area and it would be 4m wide.
- 3.4 The upper most section of the tower features an open sided summit platform area with a roof allowing views through the structure. From here, additional side features would be accessed via a horizontal beam including a rope ladder and a mounted pole. The horizontal bar on the platform area would measure 12m in diameter. The rope ladder feature would measure 3m in width. The 'leap of faith' equipment would measure some 8m in height from the ground and would comprise a pole with landing area at the top.
- 3.5 An extract from the proposed details is included below.





- 3.6 An area of safety surfacing would be placed around the structures for the protection of all users. The surfaced area would measure 16m by 11.5m.
- 3.7 The design of the equipment is standard for this type of equipment and it would meet all required safety standards. The tower would be constructed using a metal frame with timber cladding and timber roof.
- 3.8 Views of the tower from the east would be seen against the backdrop of existing educational buildings on the site.
- 3.9 Additional planting can be provided along the eastern (rear) boundary of the site and this can be conditioned, if required.
- 3.10 The proposal includes no lighting; the use of the equipment would take place during the school day during periods of appropriate weather conditions.
- 3.11 Visuals of the tower are included below.





Benefits

- 3.12 There are a multitude of wellbeing websites that confirm the health benefits of climbing, in addition to the fun element. For example, on the website of the NHS, it states that climbing offers a *“...a unique combination of physical and mental health benefits.”*
- 3.13 The benefits from this form of outdoor activity include both physical and mental health improvement. The physical benefits include improved stamina by working multiple muscle groups in the upper and lower body, developing spatial awareness and motor skills.



- 3.14 Physical activity is proven to help people with mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. This form of physical activity helps with concentration, coordination, problem solving/decision making skills, focus and improves confidence and self-esteem. Studies have also shown that climbing improves memory recall.
- 3.15 This type of challenging activity encourages young people to face their fears and encourages them to leave their comfort zone, building both resilience and self-confidence.
- 3.16 The outdoor equipment outside also benefits pupils in terms of providing access to outdoor exercise and fresh air.



4. Policy context

4.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the relevant development plan:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

4.2 For the purposes of this application an assessment is made against the relevant policies of the adopted East Lindsey Core Strategy (2018) accompanied by the settlement maps.

East Lindsey Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted July 2018)

4.3 The relevant policies are as follows:

- Strategic Policy 2 (SP2) – Sustainable Development
- Strategic Policy 10 (SP10) – Design
- Strategic Policy 26 (SP26) – Open space, Sport and Recreation

National Planning Policy and Guidance

4.4 The following sections of the Framework are considered relevant:

2. Achieving sustainable development
4. Decision making
12. Achieving well-designed places



5. Planning Considerations

Principle of development

- 5.1 The application proposal is for the erection of an outdoor climbing tower with associated equipment at Build a Future School, West Ashby, Lincolnshire. The application site is part of an established independent school, providing education for young people with special educational needs including SEMD, ASD and MLD.
- 5.2 The educational setting lies within the countryside.
- 5.3 The proposal would meet the objectives of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework as follows:
- **Meeting an economic objective** – by supporting the needs of an existing educational provision and providing outdoor equipment within the site preventing the need to transport pupils to and from an off-site outdoor activity centre. In addition, the proposal would use existing land within the educational site.
 - **Meeting a social objective** – by supporting and improving the mental and physical health of all pupils for the reasons set out in paragraphs 3.9 to 3.13 of this statement and by providing accessible equipment on site.
 - **Meeting an environmental objective** – the siting of the equipment within the school grounds would be an effective use of land that is currently underused. By locating the facilities on site, this would reduce travel costs resulting in positive environmental benefits including a reduction in vehicle emissions as a result of less vehicle movements to and from the site. This represents a sustainable use.
- 5.4 The proposal would therefore meet the requirements of Policy SP2, by improving the economic, social and environmental objectives of the area in addition to the principles set out in the NPPF. Together with the benefits to pupils the principle of the proposed development is acceptable. On this basis the Council should take a positive approach and work proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 5.5 Whilst every case must be treated on its own merits, the principle of this type of development and the benefits gained from such a proposal, have been recognised by an Inspector on appeal. For example, in an appeal against an enforcement notice that requested the removal of a climbing tower, linear rope course and climbing frame with artificial footholds in Daventry, although the Inspector upheld the enforcement notice, in terms of the principle, Daventry District Council were wholly supportive of the facilities,



recognising the educational and opportunities that it would provide for young people with additional needs.

- 5.6 In addition, Policy SP26 of the East Lindsey Core Strategy states that the Council will support development '*...that facilitates the Council's aspirations to increase participation in sports and physical activity*'. It goes on to say that the Council will '*...safeguard, expand, enhance and promote access to sports and recreational facilities and open spaces*'. In this case, the proposal would increase participation in sports and physical activity for the benefit of all pupils at Build a Future and it would provide this equipment on site. On this basis, the proposal should be supported.
- 5.7 Whilst the aims of Policy SP26 are geared towards community facilities, clearly this proposal would provide access to sports and recreational facilities and open spaces as set out in the above policy.

Other matters for consideration

- 5.8 The design of this type of equipment is subject to the manufacturer's specifications, this includes a requirement to meet all necessary safety regulations.
- 5.9 Policy SP10 supports sustainable developments that use brownfield land, use high quality materials and where it would be:

"...designed to minimise glare and light spillage, it does not unacceptably harm the rural or dark-sky character of a settlement or landscape or any nearby residential amenity; it respects the local historic environment; and it does not unacceptably harm or reduce the safety of highways, cycleways and footways."

- 5.10 The proposal would comply with the requirements of Policy SP10.
- 5.11 In terms of siting and impact on the surrounding countryside, the proposed equipment would be erected at the rear of an existing school site; it would be seen against the backdrop of existing buildings. It would be sited next to the outdoor play area and sports building so it would be seen in the context of this part of the site and would not be out of keeping in terms of the proposed use. This area is surrounded by agricultural fields to the east and south.
- 5.12 In terms of residential amenity, the nearest buildings are some distance away. The siting of the equipment would be approximately 145m away from the two bungalows that are sited to the west of the site.
- 5.13 In the above appeal, the planning officer noted that, in relation to amenity, although such a feature would be visible from a neighbouring property:



".....given the normally fleeting period in which children would tend to be climbing or otherwise using it would not affect residential amenity by virtue of loss of privacy. It would seem difficult to depart from that view when considering the usage of the abseiling element. Indeed, and likewise, children will be focusing their attention on the activity.

5.14 The above is applicable to this proposal. The difference with this scheme is that the equipment would be sited further away from the nearest residential properties and, it would not be sited alongside the road, as was the case in the above appeal, but would be sited within an existing educational setting.

5.15 In the council's pre-application advice letter for this proposal, the officer notes the following, in terms of visual amenity:

"In terms of visual impact, the tower would be viewed in the context of the wider education site. It would be seen as part of the collection of buildings that make up the Build a Future site. Lighting is not mentioned, therefore I assume it would be used in daylight hours only. Notwithstanding this, in this rural location no lighting is likely to be supported given the visual impact.

Clearly the established use of the site and the benefits the proposal would offer weigh in the planning balance. The proposed development being sited to the rear of the site and the distance and intervening features that offers between the tower and neighbours, combined with the nature of the use of the tower would lessen its impact on neighbours and visually on the wider area. Having regard for this, it is my view that the proposal would gain officer support should an application be submitted."

5.16 In response to the matter of lighting, no lighting is proposed given that the equipment would be used during school hours.

Material consideration

5.17 A material consideration in the assessment of this application is the positive benefits that would result from the pupils' use of this equipment. As referred to earlier, the school supports young people with additional educational needs.

5.18 The benefits as set out in Section 3 of this statement are summarized below.

5.19 The outdoor equipment would improve the mental health and wellbeing and fitness of pupils by:

- Providing access to a challenging outdoor sport on site
- Improving physical stamina, developing spatial awareness and motor skills
- Assisting with mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety



- Improving concentration, co-ordination, problem solving/decision making, focus and memory recall.
- Improving confidence and self-esteem
- Building resilience and self-confidence

5.20 The benefits of the proposal are also recognised by East Lindsey District Council in the pre-application advice letter, as noted above in the quote at paragraph 5.13.



6. Summary

- 6.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of Build a Future Limited, to accompany a full planning application for the erection of a climbing tower and associated equipment at 'Build a Future' Independent School, Main Street, West Ashby, Lincolnshire, LN9 5PT.
- 6.2 This application follows the receipt of positive pre-application advice from the local authority for this proposal. Further details are provided in Section 3 of this statement.
- 6.3 This statement has demonstrated that the proposal would comply with policies in the development plan and national planning policy and guidance. Therefore, planning permission should be approved in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 6.4 In addition, the positive benefits that would be gained by pupils is a material consideration that should be given significant weight in the assessment of the proposal.



EP1



View of access to site from Horncastle Road



Photograph showing the site on the left and the existing outside play area to the right



Photographs of the site



Photograph of the site showing the concrete hardstanding















Photograph showing existing access to the site



Photograph of hardstanding set at lower level

EP2



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Hobson Street,
MACCLESFIELD.
SK11 8BS

Your Reference:

Our Reference: S/201/01126/23/IC

Contact: Carrie Law

Ext: 01507 613156

Email: carrie.law@e-lindsey.gov.uk

Date: 09 June 2023

Dear Sirs,

APPLICANT: Build a Future,
PROPOSAL: Construction of outdoor climbing tower and associated equipment.
LOCATION: BUILD A FUTURE, LOUTH ROAD, WEST ASHBY, HORNCastle, LN9 5PT

I refer to your letter and enclosures of 26/05/2023 concerning the above pre-application enquiry.

I understand this pre-application enquiry relates to Build a Future, an education centre situated on the east side of Louth Road on approach to the village of West Ashby. The proposal is described as being for the erection of a climbing tower and associated equipment for use by pupils of Build a Future. I understand that this is to be located at the rear of the site.

Please note that all advice is given at your request and is without prejudice to any decision made by the local planning authority upon the receipt of and consultation/publicity and consideration of any formal planning application at a later date. Planning policy is liable to change and publicity on an application might raise issues that could not have reasonably been foreseen at this pre-application stage. This advice is therefore based upon the information available at this time and if you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In addition, and in accordance with the Council's Disposal and Retention Policy, please note that your enquiry and the Council's response to you will be kept electronically and on a confidential basis for a period of two years from the date of this response. All documentation will be destroyed after this period since the value of such advice, and if it has not led to a planning application becomes less relevant with time and as local and national policies invariably change.

The East Lindsey Local Plan Core Strategy and Settlement Proposals documents (Local Plan) adopted in July 2018 is the development plan for the District and the principal policies of relevance to this proposal would appear to be:

Strategic Policy 10 (SP10) – Design

At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the governments planning policies for England and is also of relevance. The East Lindsey development plan documents are available by following the link: <https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/localplan2018>.

From the information you have submitted and a search of the history of the site I understand that the site is used as an independent school. Previously a turkey farm, the site was granted planning permission in 2004 to be used as a youth training centre encompassing the existing poultry houses, agricultural buildings and land. Over the years it has developed with the addition of further buildings and become firmly established as an education facility. I understand that the proposal now sought looks to expand the facilities for pupils by providing a climbing tower. This would further boost the facility and thus there is policy support in principle. Clearly, however, regard must be had for the impact it may have on neighbour amenity and the character of the area.

The details submitted show it would comprise a 12m high climbing tower (measured at the eaves of the roof) to be located at the rear of the site. It would be around 140m from the boundaries with the neighbouring bungalows at the road side (1 and 2 The Bungalow) and a similar distance to dwelling to the northwest (The Paddocks) with buildings lying between. To the north there appears to be equestrian paddocks and to the east (rear) and south agricultural land. In terms of neighbour impact, the structure itself would be well removed from boundaries with dwellings. Views from the structure/overlooking would likely be the greater concern. The information supplied explains that the structure would be used by pupils of the site for purposes of physical activity, therefore the level of use of the tower would be relative to the number of users of the site, something which could be controlled by a planning condition. Moreover, the platform and climbing areas would not be areas within which users would linger, instead climbing and navigating the equipment.

In terms of visual impact, the tower would be viewed in the context of the wider education site. It would be seen as part of the collection of buildings that make up the Build a Future site. Lighting is not mentioned, therefore I assume it would be used in daylight hours only. Notwithstanding this, in this rural location no lighting is likely to be supported given the visual impact.

Clearly the established use of the site and the benefits the proposal would offer weigh in the planning balance. The proposed development being sited to the rear of the site and the distance and intervening features that offers between the tower and neighbours, combined with the nature of the use of the tower would lessen its impact on neighbours and visually on the wider area. Having regard for this, it is my view that the proposal would gain officer support should an application be submitted.

I trust that this is of assistance, if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me and if you do contact us about this enquiry please quote our reference number as shown at the top of this letter.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MG' with a large, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mike Gildersleeves
Assistant Director - Planning & Strategic Infrastructure

emery

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