
Supporting Statement

The Elba Building (part of the former Visteon Estate)
Fabian Way
Swansea
SA1 8QJ

Prepared for:

University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Roy Thomas

Prepared by:

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1. Introduction

Background and Applicant Detail

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Savills on behalf of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and Roy Thomas in support of their proposal to the change the planning use classification of roughly 8% of the Elba building on Fabian Way in Swansea from Class B2 (General Industrial) to Class D1 (Non-residential Institutions) to facilitate occupation as a scaffolding training centre. The proposal also includes modest external alterations to the building.
- 1.2. The application area is less than 1% of the former Visteon estate, which is currently controlled by the landlord – Roy Thomas. The drawing at Appendix A indicates the wider context of the Visteon site and the precise position of the Elba building within the landholding.
- 1.3. The freeholder of the site is the Welsh Government, who sub-lease it to Roy Thomas (joint applicant of this proposal).
- 1.4. Applicant 1 in this joint application is the UWTSD - Formed in 2010 as a merger between the University of Wales Lampeter and Trinity University College Carmarthen before subsequently growing to incorporate, Swansea Metropolitan University, Coleg Sir Gâr, and Coleg Ceredigion. UWTSD and its constituent organisations have a total of 25,000 learners across 17 campuses with its main campuses being located in Swansea, Lampeter, and Carmarthen, but UWTSD also has campuses in Cardiff, Birmingham and London.
- 1.5. Applicant number 2 in this joint application is Roy Thomas - who is the current long leaseholder of the Former Visteon Estate.

Summary of Proposal

- 1.6. Led by the Construction Wales Innovation Centre (CWIC) in partnership with Construction Industry Training Board Wales (CITB) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, there is an intention to create an industry leading scaffolding training facility within an existing vacant warehouse facility at the former Visteon Estate on Fabian Way. The accredited training facility will require a floor area of approximately 1400sqm, three quarters of which will be dedicated to an open plan area for practical training delivery, with the remainder accommodating more formal training provision. The new facility will mean that students based in Wales (and beyond) wishing to gain extensive scaffolding training, will no longer have to travel outside the country to acquire a full set of skills. The scaffolding training centre will be the only Construction Industry Scaffolding Record Scheme (CISRS) approved facility in South Wales, delivering the full range of training to new entrants, apprentices, up-skippers, supervisors and inspectors. The scaffolding training centre will also utilise many state of the art technologies and immersive learning resources as well as providing access to scaffolding design courses and qualifications.
- 1.7. Specifically, the facility will deliver the following:
 - Four 10 person classrooms;

Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ



- Staff office and welfare for 6 FTEs;
- Female, male and disabled toilets;
- Changing rooms and shower area;
- A reception area;
- Large training hall; and
- Utilisation of existing car parking provision for 50 car parking spaces.

1.8. The facility will accommodate a maximum of around 36 users at any one time.

1.9. This proposed change has been carefully considered and designed to utilise existing infrastructure, while also bringing a derelict facility back into use to achieve real economic regeneration benefits.

Statement Structure

1.10. In line with the pre-application meeting held with the Local Authority, the supporting information will be structured as follows:

Section 2 discusses the need for the facility (partners, catchment need and demand etc);

Section 3 provides an overview of the site selection process and criteria;

Section 4 describes the application site and its context;

Section 5 describes the site context and surrounding users;

Section 6 outlines the nature of the proposal for the site including the travel and transport arrangements and accessibility in the context of the wider site;

Section 7 describes the marketing strategy of the site to date;

Section 8 summarises the relevant local and national planning policy context and assesses the proposals against relevant local and national planning policy; and

Section 9 presents a series of concluding comments.

2. The Need for the Facility

- 2.1. Following an Official Journal of the European Union compliant tender exercise, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and a consortium led by The University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), identified the Swansea Bay region as the centre for “hub and spoke” approach to delivering construction training. The first stage was to establish the Construction Wales Innovation Centre (CWIC) “Hub” to offer state-of-the-art facilities and world-class training for 1,100 people per year. This facility is based in the recently developed SA1 Waterfront Innovation Quarter building delivered by UWTSD. The CWIC “Hub” provides an integrated career pathway between craft, trade and professional construction occupations across the whole of Wales. The CWIC “hub” is the first of its kind in Britain to provide applied research, training and consultancy through one partnership.
- 2.2. To support the central CWIC “Hub” and as part of the drive to develop state-of-the-art “spoke” facilities to allow students and businesses to learn best practice techniques and offer a “rapid construction zone” to start innovative systems for bespoke tests such as structural performance, a decision was taken to develop a dedicated scaffold training centre as the first “spoke” in the surrounding region.
- 2.3. Securing the delivery of this very bespoke industry training requirement, will provide skills and economic benefits to the region and Wales and will directly meet the needs of this important industry as follows:
- It will provide the only Construction Industry Scaffolding Record Scheme (CISRS) approved facility in Wales (the nearest one would otherwise be in Birmingham);
 - It will provide a facility that will provide a range of training to new entrants, apprentices, up-skillers, supervisors and inspectors;
 - It will mean that students based in Wales and beyond wishing to gain extensive scaffolding training, will no longer have to travel to England or beyond to acquire a full set of skills; and
 - It will address the skills needs and the Welsh construction sector’s critical skills needs.
- 2.4. Given that a “new build” training facility was a cost prohibitive option, the consortium partners agreed that the delivery solution would involve the utilisation of an existing building which would also have the significant economic benefits of bringing a derelict building back into use with significant benefits to the community and region - creating jobs, apprenticeships, upskilling the existing workforce and promoting regeneration. There were no suitable sites at or near to the CWIC site at SA1 and accordingly there was a requirement to find such a facility as close to SA1 as possible (within a 2-mile radius).

3. Site Selection Process and Criteria

3.1. The consortium partners undertook desktop local site search to identify potentially suitable existing buildings that would meet the strict requirements of the scaffold training authority – CISRS. These requirements can be summarised as follows:

- The building must be of sufficient height to allow for construction of scaffolding on mock building facades. As a result of discussions with the CISRS, it was considered that a minimum building clearance height of 10m would be required;
- Room to accommodate a minimum of nine bays for the erection of scaffolding as well as appropriate circulation space. This results in a need for in excess of 1,100sqm of internal floorspace;
- The building must either already have, or have the ability to have, a roller shutter to allow the movement of scaffolding materials inside; and
- The site needs to be within 2 miles of the recently completed CWIC Hub at UWTSD's recently completed SA1 Waterfront development.

3.2. The former Pilkington Glass Building on Oystermouth Road emerged as a very early “front runner” in terms of meeting the above requirements. Discussions with the potential landlord (Martin Morgan) reached an advance stage with the development of Heads of Terms before the building was removed from the market without warning as the landlord's development strategy had fundamentally changed.

3.3. In response to this, UWTSD and CITB commenced a comprehensive search of the marketplace to consider all options for delivery. A long list of available industrial buildings were initially considered before a shortlist of sites was drawn up. The shortlist consisted of sites that came close to fulfilling the main criteria above. Notably, and importantly, because of the nature of the building required, the vast majority of buildings considered were in industrial locations. Those that were considered in detail are listed below.

Westfield Industrial Park, Waunarlwydd, SA5 4SF

3.4. This site is situated approximately 4 miles north west of Swansea, on the edge of Waunarlwydd and adjacent to Fforestfach Industrial Estate.

3.5. Buildings on the Westfield Industrial Park provide a variety of warehousing units, with eaves heights of 12.55m. Units are too large to accommodate the proposals but could be sub-divided. There are a number of units that are still available at the Industrial Park.

3.6. The buildings were potentially suitable in terms of their features but are the furthest site away from the CWIC “Hub”.

3.7. The location of the site was not considered suitable and it was not pursued for this reason.

Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ



St. Davids Rd, Llansamlet, SA6 8QL

- 3.8. This site fronts onto Valley Way, close to Samlet Road (A48), approximately 1.25 miles from Junction 45 of the M4.
- 3.9. It is a former PC World building which was part of a semi-detached structure. The building has a total area of 25,500sqft with eave heights of 9.7m.
- 3.10. The site was dismissed given that the maximum height is below 10m, whilst quoting rates were considered too high reflecting the site's location within a retail park and its higher value existing use.
- 3.11. The site is no longer available given that Simply Gym has agreed a lease and now occupy the unit.

Prospect Park, Fforestfach, SA5 4ED

- 3.12. Prospect Park is located at Queensway, Fforestfach, an established industrial / commercial location situated approximately 2.5 miles to the south of J47 of the M4, accessed via the A483 Carmarthen Road. Swansea City Centre is approximately 3 miles to the south east.
- 3.13. The premises comprise a total of 7 warehouse / distribution units, available as a whole or in part, set within a wider complex. The buildings have an eaves height of 8.8m and an apex height of 11m.
- 3.14. During the site search process, Unit 16F was considered by UWTSD. As well as not having sufficient height to accommodate the scaffold building process, the site was acquired during the site search process. Unit 12C at Prospect Park is available but is unsuitable given its total area is 434sqm.

The Elba Building – Part of the former Visteon Estate – Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ

- 3.15. The property is accessed via Ffordd Amazon via the main roundabout on the A483 dual carriageway, which eventually links to Junction 42 of the M4 motorway, approximately 2 miles to the East.
- 3.16. Industrial unit part of a larger building. The eaves height was measured at 10.9m.
- 3.17. The Unit is within 2 miles of the CITB hub at SA1.
- 3.18. The internal area is c20000sqft.
- 3.19. The unit meets the required criteria.

Conclusion of Site Search Process

- 3.20. The scaffolding school has specific requirements which have greatly limited the number of potentially suitable sites.
- 3.21. The Elba Building in the former Visteon Estate emerged as the preferred site due to its ideal size, height, and proximity to the CWIC facility at SA1.

4. Application Site Background and Description

- 4.1. The Former Visteon Plant was opened in the 1960s and operated by Ford for the manufacturing of car axles, transmission components, and gearboxes before being transferred to Visteon in 2000. Visteon went into administration in 2009 and the site transferred ownership to the Welsh Government, before a long leasehold was agreed with the joint applicant, Roy Thomas.
- 4.2. Photographs showing the exterior of the application site are shown below:



View from the West – External elevation a proposed entrance



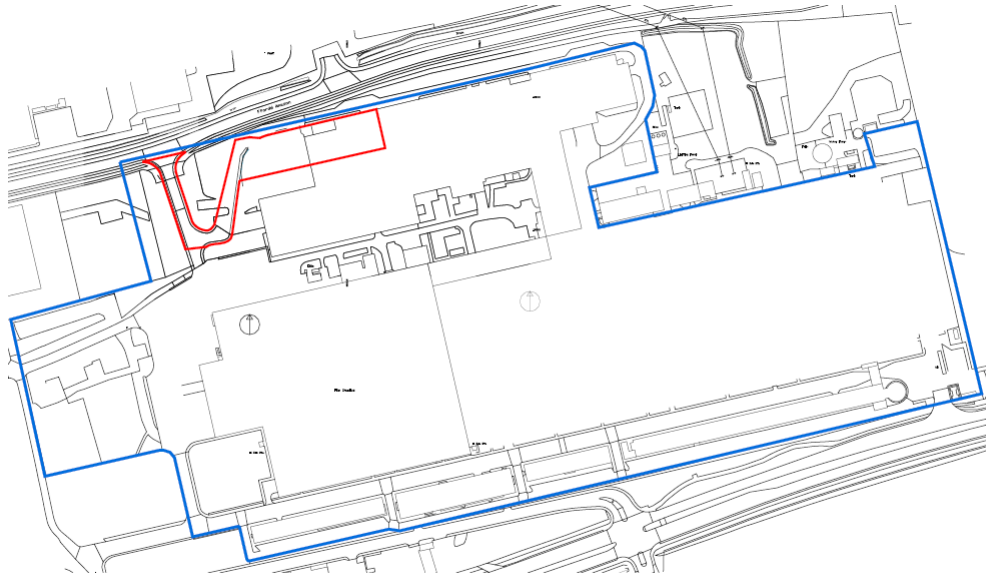
View from West – Car park and gable end

Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ

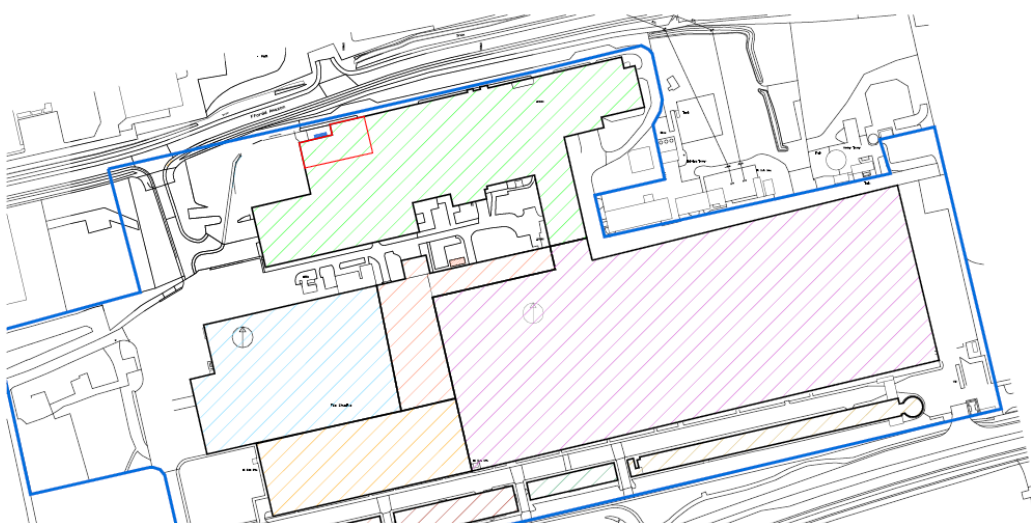


- 4.3. Appendix A shows the application site in its context. The application site is located to the north of the former Visteon Estate, having previously served as the entrance hall into the factory when operated by Visteon. The relevant extract from Appendix A is shown below:



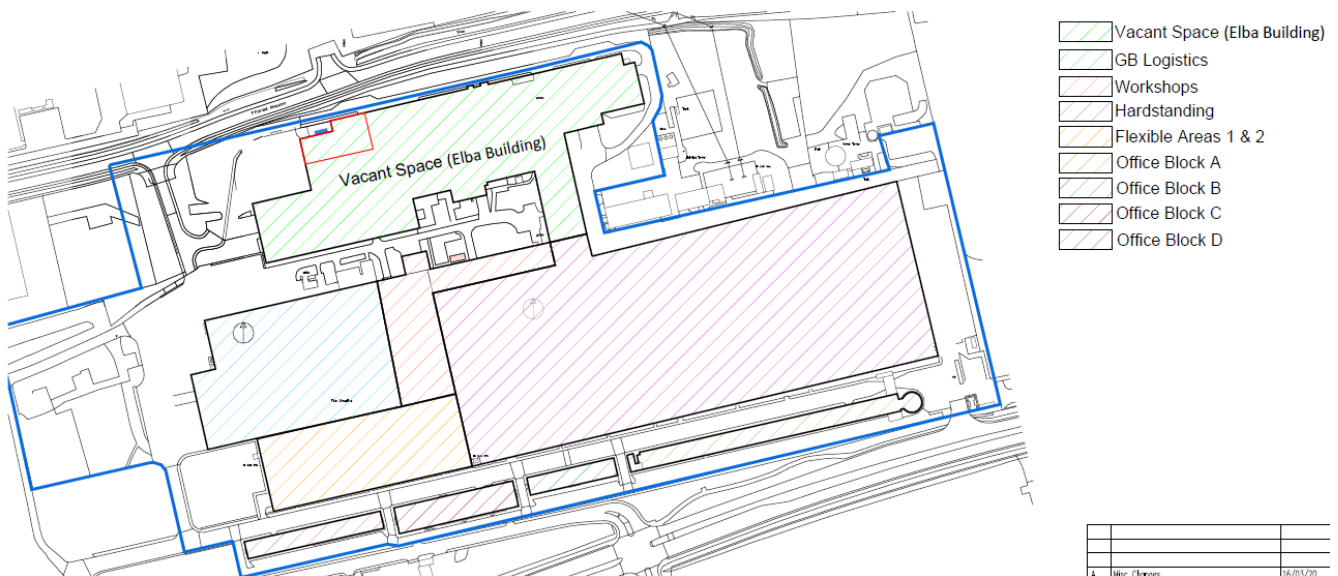
Existing Location Plan 1:1250

- 4.4. The area affected by the application is approximately 16000sqft and specifically relates to 8% of the Elba Building (denoted by red line in the drawing at Appendix B) which is a small part of the former Visteon Estate (denoted by the blue line in the drawing at Appendix B) on Fabian Way, Swansea. Overall the area referred to by this application affects just under 1% of the available area within the overall land ownership of the former Visteon Estate. The relevant extract from Appendix B is shown below:



5. Site Context and Surrounding Uses

- 5.1. The application site is part of the former Visteon Estate which is now held on long lease by the joint applicant Roy Thomas. The site forms part of an established employment and industrial area that is bound to the south by Fabian Way (which connects Swansea in the west to Junction 42 of the M4 to the east) and the newly constructed Fordd Amazon to the north.
- 5.2. The current general land uses are indicated in the key within the drawing at Appendix B. In summary there are currently a mixture of workshop and ancillary space accommodated in a series of linked office units and storage warehouses that are multi-let to a number of firms, predominantly in the technology and film sectors as well as some more industrial uses such as distribution and logistics. The relevant extract from Appendix B is shown below:



- 5.3. The east of the site is bound by a dense area of mature trees, on the eastern side of which is the Amazon Distribution Centre with associated open lorry yard and staff car parking (both regular and overflow).
- 5.4. To the west of the site is the recently constructed Kings Dock Building (with associated hardstanding, yards, and landscaped area) and to the south of that a large irregularly shaped parcel of land.
- 5.5. The nearest residential properties to the application site are those located on the southern side of Elba Crescent which is circa 400m south west of the application site.

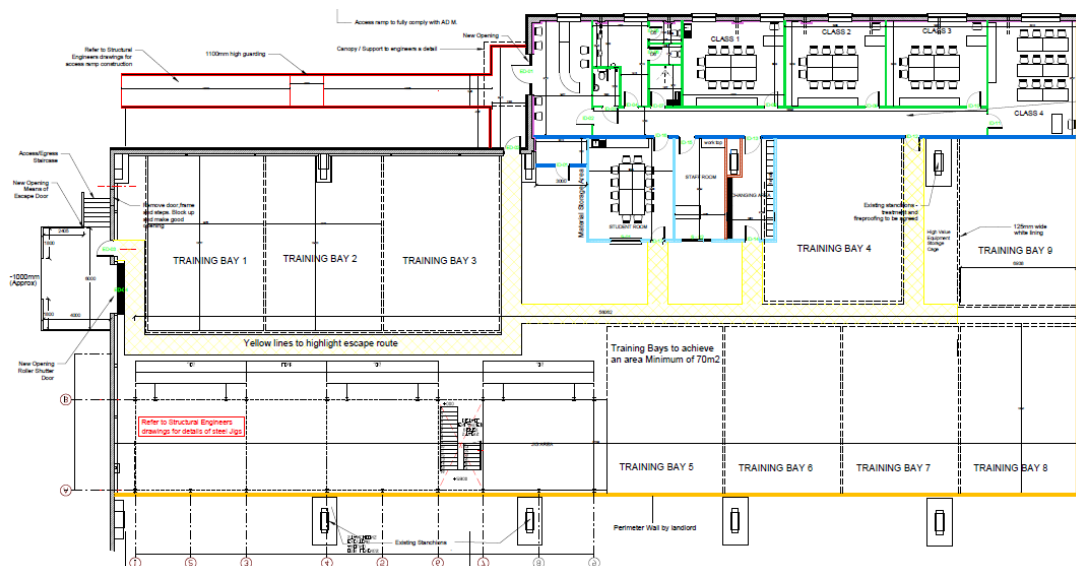
6. Summary of the Proposed Development

Scheme Specifics

- 6.1. Planning permission is sought for the change of use from Class B2 (General Industrial) to Class D1 (Non-Residential Institutions). To reflect this, the description of development is as follows:

“Change of use from Class B2 to Class D1 to facilitate occupation as a scaffolding training centre and external alterations”

- 6.2. The facility will have the ability to offer training to a maximum of 36 students at a time which will be administered by 6 members of staff.
- 6.3. The Elba Building is ideally suited to the requirement for a large practical area where students will erect and disassemble scaffolding under the supervision of staff.
- 6.4. Alongside this, the facility will accommodate four 10 person classrooms. These will be used for the more formal training delivery which supplements the practical scaffolding activity in the adjacent practical area.
- 6.5. Floorspace within the application site will also provide the necessary ancillary facilities and the site will also provide a reception area, staff office and welfare facilities, a refreshment/break out area, toilets, and changing/showering facilities.
- 6.6. The intention is for the facility to operate between 08:00 and 18:00 Mondays to Fridays.
- 6.7. A set of proposed general arrangement drawings for refurbishment of the space are shown at Appendix C. The relevant extract is shown below:



Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ



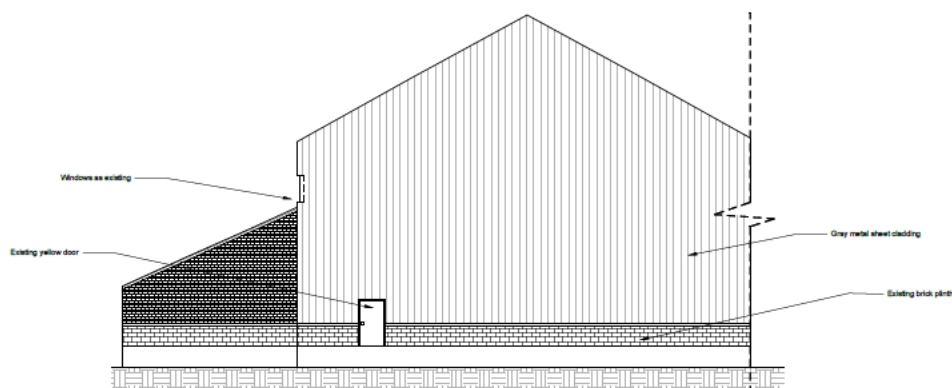
6.8. Some modest external alterations will also take place as follows:

- Installation of a roller shutter door in order to allow the 1 time delivery of the scaffolding equipment to be used at the facility;
- 2 single leaf emergency exits required by building control;
- Pedestrian access door to the main reception area; and
- Pedestrian access ramp to the main reception area (DDA compliant).

6.9. The above proposals are shown in the existing and proposed elevations at Appendix D and Appendix E. The relevant extracts are shown below:



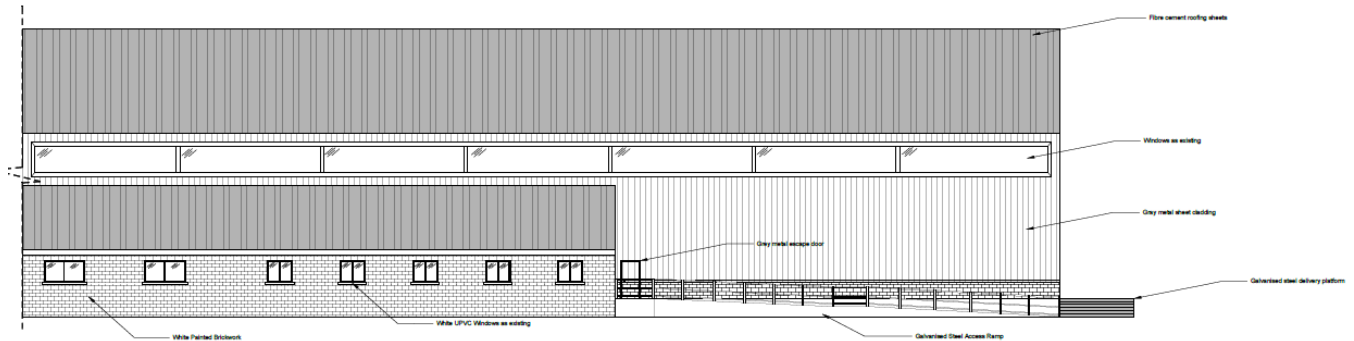
Existing Side Elevation - Scale 1:100



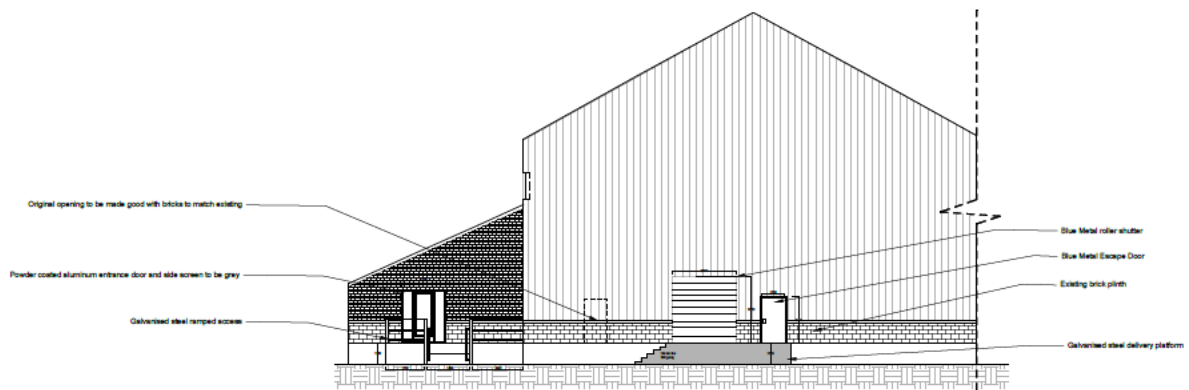
Existing Front Elevation - Scale 1:100

Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ



Proposed Side Elevation - Scale 1:100



Proposed Front Elevation - Scale 1:100

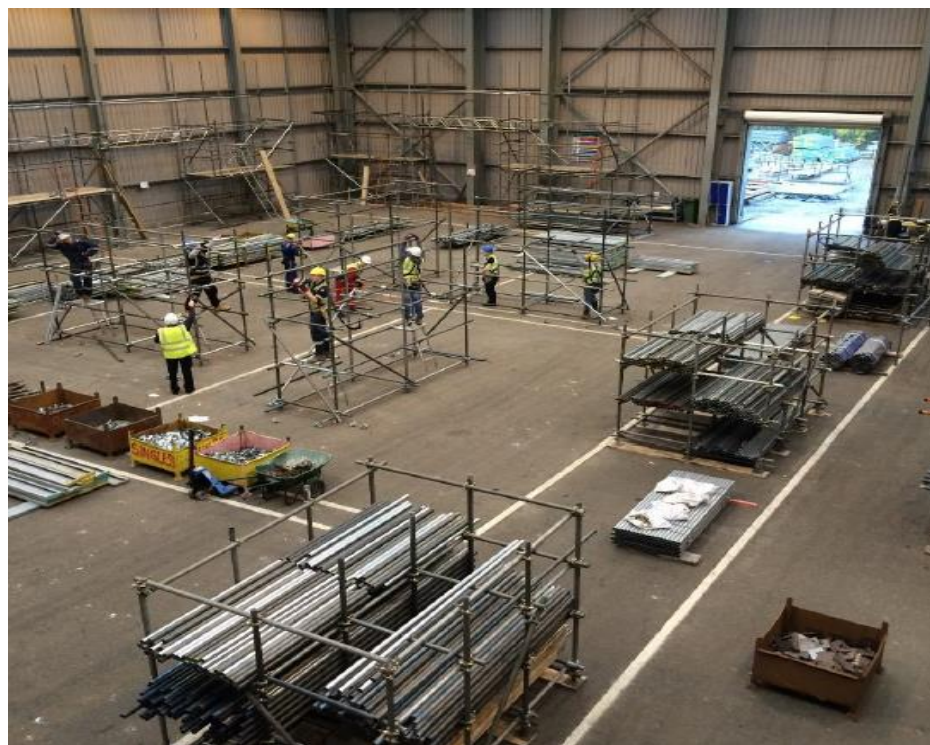
Example Photographs

- 6.10. In developing proposals for the application site, the UWTSD has undertaken site visits to other facilities across the UK. Examples of the nature of how the building would be used are shown in the photographs below:

Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ

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Photographs indicate the industrial nature of the facility, much of the space will utilise the existing configuration for storage, temporary structure erection etc.

Accessibility and Servicing

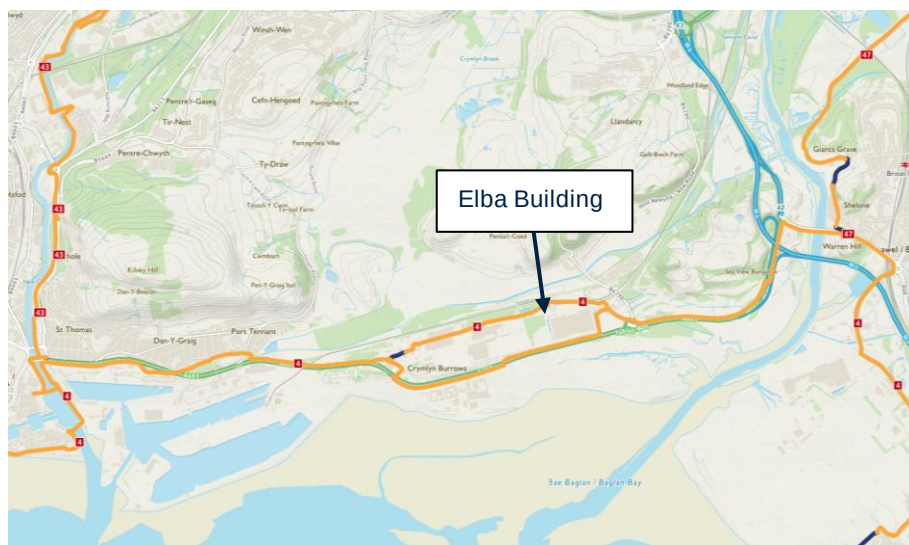
- 6.11. Due to its position to the northern edge of the former Visteon Estate, the application site can take advantage of a dedicated access from Ffordd Amazon. Other site users are concentrated to the southern edge of the former Visteon Estate and largely make use of an alternative access off Fabian Way. It is anticipated that there will be very little interaction between the users of the proposed scaffolding training centre and the existing site users from an accessibility perspective.
- 6.12. In terms of specific and local accessibility, the Elba Building, with the exception of the proposed scaffolding centre which will make up just 8% of total floorspace, is used infrequently for filming purposes and accordingly will remain unaffected by this proposal. Any future potential lease arrangement for this space will be the subject of future planning applications, but it is hoped that the success of this facility may lead to future growth and the need for additional floor space to be used to support the scaffold training facility.
- 6.13. Care has been taken to minimise the impact on the local traffic infrastructure by providing sufficient car parking through the re-use of an existing car park, which will be upgraded and remarked to create approximately 50 car parking spaces. In addition, designated and appropriate safe pedestrian & vehicular routes are defined through the site, which allow for any interaction with other site users to be safely managed, fully integrated with the surrounding highway infrastructure. All external areas within the scope of the application will also be properly demarcated with appropriate perimeter fencing.
- 6.14. The approach to sustainability will also ensure that the site users are encouraged to use the existing surrounding infrastructure such as the excellent new public transport links recently delivered by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council through the award winning Ffordd Amazon development, which includes access to a primary bus route. The bus routes are serviced regularly as indicated below:

Route Number	Frequency	Originator Station	Via	Destination Station
9	Every 20 mins	Hendrefoelan Student Village	Singleton Campus	Swansea Bay Campus
X5	Hourly	Swansea City Bus Station	Brtion Ferry	Neath
X7	Hourly	Swansea City Bus Station	Bay Campus Jersey Marine Neath Tonna Resolven Glynneath	Glynneath
84	Hourly	Swansea City Bus Station	Sandfields Estate Elba Crescent	Port Talbot
X1 Cymru Clipper	Hourly	Swansea City Bus Station	Port Talbot Margam Park Pyle	Bridgend

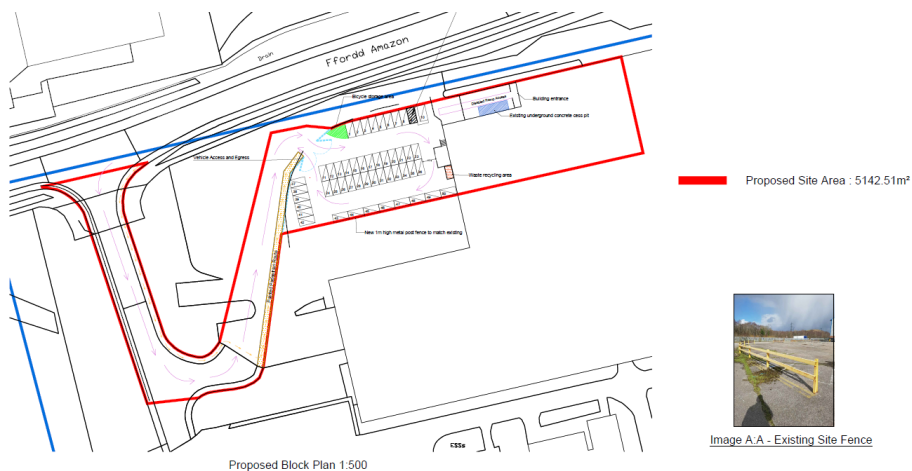
The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ

X3 Cymru Clipper	Hourly	Swansea City Bus Station	Port Talbot Ynysygwas Bryn	Maesteg
38	Hourly	Swansea City Bus Station	Fabian Way Jersey Marine Skewen	Neath

- 6.15. The scheme proposes a dedicated and secure area for cycle storage and benefits from the close proximity to a National Cycle Network route as indicated below:



- 6.16. The proposal has made provision for a dedicated area for waste recycling.
- 6.17. The drawing at Appendix F shows how the above proposals will be incorporated into the application site area. An extract is shown below:



Supporting Statement

The Elba Building - Part of the former Visteon Estate, The Elba, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8QJ



- 6.18. It is considered that there will also be no additional impact on the local ecology/drainage as a tank storage solution is being proposed.
- 6.19. The joint applicants are confident that this proposed change of use application has been carefully considered and designed to utilise existing infrastructure, whilst bringing a derelict facility back into use to achieve real economic regeneration benefits.

7. Site Marketing Strategy

- 7.1. Since 2012 Welsh Government (as the freeholder), Roy Thomas (as the long leaseholder) have worked collaboratively to market the available space in the former Visteon Estate to the open market.
- 7.2. This marketing strategy has met with reasonable success. There are currently a mixture of workshop and ancillary space accommodated in a series of linked office units and storage warehouses that are multi-let to a number of firms, predominantly in the technology and film sectors as well as some more industrial uses such as distribution and logistics.
- 7.3. The marketing strategy to date has been endorsed by the Local Authority economic regeneration team as the e-mail at Appendix G indicates. In summary they have indicated that the proposed change of use will:

“Provide benefits to the NPT and wider region, support the construction sector skills training needs as well as the working at heights / rigging training for the creative sector. Being the first set up at the Elba site, this would also show the potential at the site, provide context to what could be done and give some focus for any other future interest at the Elba and Fabian Way site”

- 7.4. The remaining available space in the former Visteon Estate is considered more than sufficient to meet any current market demand for the existing type of employment use. The impact of the proposed change of use is *de minimis* in the wider context of available space.
- 7.5. Savills have also reviewed the market for employment floorspace, which indicates that there is a significant surplus of employment use space available in the area which in itself strongly supports this change of use application. A review of Neath Port Talbot's property register shows a wide range and number of vacant properties, which suggest that the alternative use of this site would not undermine the ability of companies to identify suitable premises. From a review of that register, Savills is aware that there are a number of premises available to let (but not suitable for the proposed scaffolding school) including at Docks Road, Port Talbot, Cramic Business Park in Port Talbot, South Wales Distribution Centre in Kenfig, Baglan Energy Park in Baglan, Swansea Valley Business Park in Ystalyfera, and Llewelyn's Quay in Port Talbot.

8. Planning Policy and Assessment

Preface

8.1. This section of the Statement will set out the national and local planning policies relevant in the determination of this planning application as well as assessing the proposals against the identified planning policy context. In doing so, it makes reference to a series of planning policy documents as identified below:

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10;
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 23 (Economic Development); and
- Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP).

8.2. The Statement is structured to consider matters relating to the principle of development and site suitability, before identifying material considerations in favour of the granting of planning permission.

Principle of Development

8.3. Chapter 5 of PPW is entitled “Productive and Enterprising Places” and relates to the Welsh Government’s approach to employment and employment land.

8.4. A broad approach to “Economic Development” is taken by Welsh Government in PPW with there being a recognition that, whilst the predominant part, non-Class B uses play an important role in economic development, with Paragraph 5.4.2 of PPW specifically noting the role that the construction sector (which this development would help to support) plays.

8.5. Paragraphs 5.4.3 and 5.4.4 place a requirement on local authorities to allocate and safeguard a mix of different types of employment land and seek to prevent their redevelopment for alternative uses.

8.6. The LDP Proposals Map extract for the area is replicated below:



- 8.7. The Proposals Map shows that the site is within the Fabian Way Existing Employment Area (shown shaded light brown), one of 19 designated under Policy EC2 of the LDP.
- 8.8. Policy EC2 (Existing Employment Areas), states that such sites will generally be protected for the uses identified in Policy EC3 (Employment Area Uses) which are replicated below:
- 1) Class B1, B2, and B8 uses;
 - 2) Ancillary facilities which support the function of the primary employment area. These uses are described as being complimentary to the wider employment function of the area; or
 - 3) Non – Class B commercial uses. Paragraph 5.2.21 of the policy subtext provides a list of such uses but is not intended to be exhaustive.
- 8.9. For all of the above uses, the second paragraph of Policy EC3 states that these uses will only be acceptable where they do not cause adverse impacts on the overall function of the employment area.
- 8.10. The proposed use is considered by the applicant to constitute a “commercial service unrelated to Class B” which can therefore be demonstrated to be policy compliant. The scope of what could be considered to be complimentary is obviously broad and, whilst Paragraph 5.2.21 of the LDP identifies a series of potential acceptable uses, this list is clearly not exhaustive and included for indicative purposes.
- 8.11. The suitability of the proposed use as a “commercial service” is further bolstered by its particular site requirements which, by their very nature point to the need for such uses to be located within industrial scale units which are likely to be designated as Existing Employment sites under Policy EC2. In addition, the joint applicant (Roy Thomas) fully supports the use on the basis that the scaffolding training would be well-related to the use of Bay Studios for the film industry given the reliance on the film sector on scaffolding skills to create and form part of production sets. This factor further demonstrates the complimentary nature of the use to the wider use of the site.
- 8.12. Further, both national and local policy endorse the use of a wide definition when classifying employment uses.
- 8.13. A broad approach to “Economic Development” is taken by Welsh Government in PPW with there being a recognition that, whilst the predominant part, non-Class B uses play an important role in economic development, with Paragraph 5.4.2 of PPW specifically noting the role that the construction sector (which this development would help to support) plays.
- 8.14. TAN 23 continues to endorse the approach taken in PPW in terms of how employment uses should be defined with Paragraph 1.1.1 stating that:

“In producing development plans or determining planning applications local planning authorities need to bear in mind that traditional business use, classes B1-B8, only account for part of the activity in the economy.”

- 8.15. It is also notable that Paragraph 5.2.21 of the policy's subtext states the need for a "wider mix" of uses needing to be permitted in Existing Employment Areas.
- 8.16. At the start of the "Productive and Enterprising Places" chapter, it is notable that the provision of learning and training opportunities is identified as being closely aligned to the Well-Being Goal of creating a "Prosperous Wales" whilst also being a key issue of the chapter as a whole.
- 8.17. It is clear from both TAN 23 and PPW, that a broad approach should be taken to identifying employment uses, with the role of non-Class-B uses recognised and PPW even going as far as recognising the importance of training in meeting the Well-Being Goals and general employment aims. In that sense, national guidance points to a broad definition of what a "commercial service" could be and, whilst not explicit, hints to the inclusion of training uses.

Site Suitability

- 8.18. With Section 6.2 of this Statement demonstrating the acceptability of the proposals in terms of the principle of development, this section will consider the site's suitability to accommodate such uses in terms of their environmental and amenity impact.
- 8.19. Running throughout TAN 23, and in particularly Section 2, is a recognition that employment uses can cause amenity and environmental harm and accordingly, should be located in clusters and in locations best capable of accommodating them.
- 8.20. As a starting point, it is essential to thoroughly understand the site's location. It is located in an established industrial area (as demonstrated by its designation through Policy E2) that is characterised by a range of industrial and commercial uses such as the Amazon Distribution Centre (to the east) and both the Kings Dock Building and NPT Recycling to the west and north west. The nearest residential properties to the application site are those located on the southern side of Elba Crescent. These properties are some 400m away from the application site and are separated by the western part of the Bay Studios Building. Accordingly, both given the distance and the nature of surrounding occupiers, it is considered that the proposals will pose no detrimental noise impact to surrounding users. Further, whilst the proposed use would generate some noise, it would be enclosed within the envelope of the existing building and would be during day time hours when the training courses are being taught. This would not be out of character with the long established B2 use of the site.
- 8.21. The site is located within a highly sustainable and accessible location by walking, cycling, or by bus, The level of vehicular movements generated by the proposed use is considered to be modest, comprising of a maximum of 42 trips both before and after the end of training sessions. Given the application site's proximity to the Amazon Distribution Centre (which will have a high trip rate related both to staff and lorry movements), it is considered that the impact of these additional movements on the network capacity will be negligible.
- 8.22. A total of 50 spaces will be provided in connection with the proposed use on the area of hardstanding. Whilst there are no standards relating to training facilities contained within the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), the quantum of car parking standards is appropriate to the number of people that would use the site. No alterations are proposed to the access which is considered to be suitable given its previous role associated with the Visteon Plant.

External Alterations

- 8.23. As described above, the external alterations proposed as part of this application are minimal and are required to facilitate occupation as a scaffolding training facility. The site is not within a conservation area and is not within the setting of a listed building and, with the alterations retaining the unit's industrial nature, it is considered that the proposals are acceptable in terms of design and appearance.

Material Considerations

- 8.24. There are a number of material considerations in favour of the granting of planning permission as are summarised below.
- 8.25. Firstly, the application site is under-utilised. The sheer size of the studios means that the alternative use of such a small part of the site will have no impact on the continuation of such uses elsewhere. Given how this northern portion of the site has been used, it has not been actively marketed but nevertheless it is notable that the joint applicant is currently marketing vacant units at the southern edge of the site, pointing to an alternative supply of such floorspace within the locality.
- 8.26. Secondly, a comprehensive site search has been undertaken to identify available suitable sites. The scaffolding school has specific site requirements that, by their very nature, eliminate the vast majority of sites and, in reality, means that only either a big box retail unit (where rents would be too expensive) or an industrial unit would be suitable. In considering a number of options, with the exception of the Elba Building, these have all been dismissed based on their inadequate size, lack of appropriate eaves height, or distance from the existing CWIC facility at SA1. The application site presents the only suitable site due to its proximity to the CWIC facility, its substantial internal area, its height eave heights, and its provision of onsite car parking.
- 8.27. Thirdly, the scaffolding school will deliver substantial economic and social benefits. As well as providing 6 full time jobs for trainers, the facility will provide trainees with a well-regarded and recognised qualification to the benefit of the construction industry. Such facilities are few and far between and not only will the addition of such a facility provide a facility in a currently under-served area of the Country, it will also place Neath Port Talbot at the forefront of this training sector. The support from the Council's Business Development Officer, set out at Appendix G, is also material here.
- 8.28. Fourthly, the proposal is for the change of use of the floorspace shown and the installation of a roller shutter. Internal alterations are minimal and effectively relate to the addition of various services and classrooms with the majority of the unit retained for the installation of scaffolding. The changes are therefore easily reversed and would not prevent the future use of the building for Class B purposes.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. This Supporting Statement has been prepared by Savills in support of an application submitted by the UWTSD and Roy Thomas for the change of use of part of the Elba Building in the Former Visteon Estate from Class B2 to Class D1 to facilitate its operation as a scaffolding training centre alongside modest external alterations.
- 9.2. The scaffolding training school has specific site requirements and the UWTSD, CWIC, and the CITB have undertaken a comprehensive site search in order to identify sites that may potentially be suitable and available. This has revealed the application building to be the most suitable.
- 9.3. The site is located within an Existing Employment Area and this Supporting Statement has demonstrated that the proposals comply with Policy EC3 of the LDP given that it is considered to represent a commercial service that is complementary to the wider use of the site and is ideally suited to the employment location.
- 9.4. Importantly the alternative use (to B2), will not undermine or compromise the wider operation of the Fabian Way Existing Employment Area. Firstly, it is a compatible use with other B class activities and secondly, the building represents under 1% of the available developable area within the former Visteon Estate.
- 9.5. Further, there are substantial material considerations in favour in support of this application relating to the fact that the proposals will bring part of under-used building back into active use and will generate employment (both direct and indirect). It will deliver the first training facility of its kind in Wales, which will support the construction industry across Wales and beyond. Delivering the facility will result in sustainability benefits by providing a more localised training centre for the construction industry and, will perform a complementary function to the wider site.
- 9.6. The site is accessible by active travel and public transport and will not result in any conflicts with traffic movements across the wider site.
- 9.7. Taken together, the proposal is considered to be compliant with both national and local planning policy, as well as supporting the principles of the Well-Being Goals and delivering both local and wider economic and social benefits.