

CSSC SPORTS AND LEISURE

ERECTION OF SPORTS CENTRE COMPRISING INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FACILITIES WITH PARKING, ACCESS, FOOTPATH/CYCLE ROUTE AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT CIVIL SERVICE SPORTS CLUB GROUND, COLLEGE WAY, TAUNTON, AS AMENDED & AMPLIFIED BY AGENTS LETTER DATED 12TH NOVEMBER 2008 WITH REVISED PLANS SITE PLAN 2462 (03) 001 L; 2462 (03) 100 REV H; 2462 (03) 101 REV E; 2462 (03) 200 REV D AND THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATIVE PLANS 2462 (03) 202 REV A & 2462 (03) 201 REV A.

321546.123357

Full Planning Permission

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PROPOSAL

Members will recall this report was previously put before Planning Committee on the 23rd July 2008. Members deferred determination to allow the applicant to address the recommended reasons for refusal which were (1) impact on protected recreational open space and potential loss of trees (2) highway safety (3) loss of sports facilities, and, Members expressed concern at the proposed design and materials of the building.

Permission is sought for the erection of a new sports club, built over two floors, with access off College Way, with provision for 122 parking spaces. The new building would be located at the western end of the existing site and the application site excludes the existing CSSC clubhouse, car park, and indoor bowls building. The red line of the application site has been amended to omit the hard court area, which subject to contract, will be taken on by Queens College. The purpose of the new facility is to provide a comprehensive use of the site with both indoor and outdoor facilities. The proposal would see the retention of the two winter sports pitches, cricket square, together with a new all weather cricket pitch in compensation for the loss of a second cricket pitch, and archery area, while internally the facilities will include a beginners and main swimming pool, health and fitness studios, a gymnasium, sauna, crèche facility, ancillary café bar, sports bar, changing rooms and showers as well as separate changing facilities for the outdoor sport use. The proposed opening times for members would be from 6.30am to 11.00pm. Existing members of CSSC will be given priority to membership with the remaining club capacity open to the wider community.

The application, following an earlier withdrawal of the scheme – reference 52/2007/037, incorporates a revised visibility splay, requiring the loss of two protected trees. A new footpath/cycleway link proposed between Trull Road and College Way. The scheme also removes a proposed service road and compound in close proximity to Pitts Close. The current application has been revised to provide pedestrian access to the site from the bus stops on College Way.

Following the deferment of this application the agent has been in negotiation with officers and consultees to bring forward the development. The agent has taken on board Members concern to the design of the building and the following revisions have

been made. The building has been repositioned further into the site, from College Way, albeit marginally as to not impact upon the existing sports pitches. The elevation treatment has been amended to provide increased glazing and the building is now proposed to feature cedar timber cladding, previously metallic cladding, to provide for a softer external appearance more appropriate to this urban fringe location. An entrance feature consisting of a 'projecting wing' or 'fin' had been proposed but this has been omitted following concern raised by officers and the Parish Council and Civic Society on the grounds of its scale and visual impact.

One of the wider issues during the previous hearing at Committee related to the long term plan for the existing CSSC buildings. An agreement has been reached between Queens College and CSSC for the acquisition of the surplus CSSC premises and car park to the north, and multi-use games area, currently excluded from the application site. An application, reference 52/2008/034, on behalf of Queens College has now been submitted for a change of use of the CSSC buildings from Use Class D2 (Assembly and leisure) to D1 (Non-residential institutions). Both applications to be considered by the Planning Committee at this meeting.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

In 2007, planning reference 52/2007/037, permission was sought for 'the erection of a sports centre, parking and access'. The application was withdrawn in order to address various issues that arose during the consideration of the scheme.

The application site comprises sports pitches laid to grass. The site is designated as protected recreational open space. The existing Civil Service Sports Club (CSSC) buildings are served by access from Trull Road, which is considered to be inadequate, and are located adjacent to Queens College. The agent states that the CSSC, who have occupied the site since the 1950's, is no longer viable in its current format with the facility scheduled to close later in 2008. In order to remain viable the vision is to provide the core outdoor facilities, with the introduction of a purpose built building to provide indoor leisure activities and facilities.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY - (Original Comments) Through discussions with the developer both pre-application, and since the submission of the previous application on this site, 52/2007/037, it was established that the proposed sports centre, was to be a direct replacement for the existing facility, currently served from Trull Road. Despite this issue being raised previously, there is no mention within the current application of the existing facility, and how this area of land is intended to relate to the current proposal.

The proposal seeks to gain access from College Way, a distributor road within the route hierarchy. It is usual that a distributor road does not serve private or individual points of access, and as such there is a presumption in terms of highway design against the provision of an access from College Way. This is specified in the adopted document, 'Estate Roads in Somerset – Design Guidance Notes'. It was suggested most strongly in my response to the previous application, that a balance needed to be struck and that the aforementioned additional information was required.

This information has not been included as part of the application, and as such the Highway Authority continues to have concerns about the proposal, and would again request that further information be provided relating to the existing site, and its ongoing/future use, to enable a full assessment of the implications of the scheme.

The proposed vehicular access has been modified, and considering it in terms of detail alone, it is improved. The required visibility has now been agreed at 2.4m x 90m in both directions with no obstruction to visibility greater than 900mm above adjoining road level. This is achieved, and demonstrated on a survey drawing that has been supplied.

The drawing submitted as part of the Transport Assessment, number RLT/012/01'P4, shows an acceptable access layout, and a footway along the site frontage. This is accepted, but will need to be provided as part of a formal agreement with the highway Authority. It will also be necessary to agree a crossing point on College Way to the south of the access which will be furnished appropriately.

There is no mention within the submission of restricting parking along College Way, however this will need to be explored in the interests of highway safety, and can be done as part of any formal agreement.

As part of the response from the Highway Authority to the previous application, it was stated that the developer, provide an upgrade to the existing crossing facilities on Trull Road to link the cycle routes, as well as provide the pedestrian/cycle route through the site that is included in the LTP and Local Plan. I note that the link is shown in this submission, although there is concern at how users will interact with traffic to the existing site, as no information has been forthcoming about the future use of this land.

The layout of the ped/cycle route is generally acceptable; however it is essential that there is a clear understanding of how this will be accessed, and of any conflicts that will occur, before the Highway Authority will be happy to progress with this.

Without the additional information that is required, the Highway Authority reluctantly recommends the refusal of this application for the following reasons:

- The Local Planning Authority and the Highway Authority in adopting the Somerset County Council publication 'Estate Roads in Somerset' have agreed standards for the design and layout of streets. The proposed access does not conform to these agreed standards and is not, therefore, adequate to serve the development proposed.
- Insufficient information has been submitted regarding the use of the existing buildings within the site, to satisfy the Highway Authority that the existing substandard access to Trull Road can be stopped up, the vehicular traffic removed, and the pedestrian/cycle link provided so that it is safe to use.

WESSEX WATER - a connection can be made to the foul sewer to the north. There is a public surface water sewer in the verge of College Way. Connection may be made to this but TDBC will limit the discharge to green field run off rate. The applicant is advised to consider SUDS techniques. In line with Government protocol the applicant is advised to contact Developer Services to see if drainage systems can be adopted under a

Section 104 Agreement. The Sewage Treatment Works and terminal pumping station have spare capacity provided there is no trade waste being generated. There are water mains in the vicinity available for connection.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER - the building and car parking, being located adjacent to College Way, will have a detrimental impact on the character of the 'Urban Open Space' EN24 and 'Recreational Open Space' C3 and even with landscape enhancement will in my opinion not be appropriate for this location.

Revised Comments (15/12/08) - The revisions would have no further impact. The landscape officer has confirmed to officers that whilst there is an objection in principle to the development in this location, he is satisfied that if Members are minded to approve the scheme, the landscape mitigation plan is acceptable.

DRAINAGE OFFICER – Further to previous comments, I note that SUDS are to be installed, see Planning Statement April 2008 and Design & Access Statement August 2007 they are not indicated on the application form. The applicant should forward details of how SUDS are to be applied to this development and make a condition of any approval, should it be given.

However, no such approval should be given until such detailed proposals have been submitted to and agreed in writing with this Authority.

LEISURE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER – Initial comment - I have the following observations to make on this application. Whilst the applicant argues that the second cricket square on this site is in effect a square by default rather than by design the fact is that a second square existing on the site and it will be lost if the development is permitted to proceed.

At present games are played concurrently on the 2 squares and the provision of an artificial wicket on the edge of the main square is not sufficient replacement for the proposed loss. The outcome of the loss of this sport facility will be to displace a cricket team. TDBC has no cricket facilities suitable to accommodate a team having reduced the number of cricket pitches available for public use in recent years (since the public in 2003 of the Playing Pitch Strategy referred to by the applicant).

The offer of free 'off peak' use of the grass pitches is no compensation for the loss of this facility as in practice the 'offer' is likely to be taken up by few, if any, schools (and the second square is used by adult teams rather than young people).

In order not to object to this application on the grounds of a loss of sports facilities I would expect to see a formal agreement between Queens College and the Civil Service Sports Club that one cricket square on the Queens College site is made available for use by the teams currently using the CSSC site between suitable agreed dates.

Regardless of the benefits that the new club would undoubtedly bring to CCSC members the proposal means the loss of playing fields for both a building and car parking and the loss of trees for access. All of which is regrettable.

There seems to have been no consideration given to building on the existing site of the club and whilst this may be more 'difficult' to achieve I would have thought it would have been an option worth exploring especially if access could be gained from Hoveland

Drive.

The applicant places great emphasis on the supposed 'latent demand' for health and fitness facilities in Taunton, yet there is little evidence to support this view. In fact, recent reports, including one from Strategic Leisure Ltd, indicate that the market may well be saturated (the relatively recent closure of Fitness First may have altered the picture to some extent but not fundamentally). This matter is unlikely to be a major factor in making a planning decision but should be ignored as it is speculation.

I object to this application on the grounds that it means the loss of a cricket pitch with the consequent displacement of at least one team. The alternative offered (an artificial pitch on the remaining square) is unacceptable. I also consider that building on the existing site should be explored rather than automatically proposed to build on the sports pitches.

Further comments in response to the provision of community use as set out by the agent, letter dated 19th June 2008. Comments awaited from Queens College before providing a comprehensive response. Nevertheless, the submission from the agent does not make it clear that there is a guarantee that displaced cricket teams for CSSC will have access to facilities at Queens on a Saturday afternoon (for instance) – it merely suggests a 'priority booking' situation that could in fact not solve the issue at all.

For clarity I would expect a guarantee that those teams currently playing at CSSC and displaced as a result of the proposed developments have guaranteed access to Queens College facilities at a level at least equal to that which they currently enjoy – for instance they forward their fixtures in April and these are guaranteed to be accommodated at Queens College without question.

Revised Comments (04/12/08) – We would also require the multi use games area now included in this application continue to be made available for community use.

Revised Comments (12/12/08) – Confirmation that following discussions with CSSC and Queens College the 'joint use agreement' as outlined in the draft S106 is sufficient to remove our objection to the application.

It remains regrettable that playing fields are lost to buildings and car parks but I am satisfied that the alternative provision is sufficient to compensate for the loss of actual sports provision in this case.

SPORT ENGLAND: In commenting on applications we assess whether the proposal meets any of the 5 exceptions to our Playing Field Policy 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England'. This requires that:

'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.'

In order for the proposals to fully meet the requirements of E5 of our policy, we would wish to see the following requirements secured as part of any permission that is granted.

Loss of second cricket square

We note that there are two cricket squares on the site, and that the applicants have suggested (page 40 of the Planning Statement) that the second wicket is substandard and was developed by local users 'by default rather than design'. They suggest that this loss can be replaced by the provision of a synthetic cricket wicket on the first square.

However, information provided by your Sports Services Manager suggests there is, from time to time, concurrent use by league teams of both cricket pitches at the CSSC ground on a Saturday, and as such at least one cricket team will be displaced if the development goes ahead without this issue being addressed.

The applicants have stated (para. 7.6 of the Planning Statement) that there is currently an agreement between Queens College and the CSSC which enables both parties to utilise each others facilities, particularly the sports pitches, and that this is intended to continue. The applicants have stated that the cricket facilities at Queens College will in the future be able to be used by future members of ROKO if the proposals were to go ahead. We consider that, for the application to be acceptable it will be essential to satisfactorily address the issue of accommodating displaced cricket teams that may wish to play when the remaining CSSC pitch is being used.

In order to achieve the above, we would request written confirmation from Queens College that the existing arrangements with the Civil Service Sports Club will continue once the ROKO club is established, or alternatively a requirement (by way of a planning condition or Section 106 Agreement) is included as part of any planning approval that is granted, along the following lines:

Condition A: The development hereby granted shall not be commenced until a Joint Use Scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, after consultation with Sport England, for the use of an alternative cricket pitch that is at least as accessible and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality as the existing cricket pitch which will be lost as a result of the development. The scheme shall include details of location, pricing policy, days and hours of use, access by CSSC members and non-members, and include a mechanism for review. The approved Scheme shall be implemented upon commencement of use of the development.

Reason – To ensure the satisfactory quantity, quality and accessibility of compensatory provision which secures a continuity of use and to accord with LP Policy C3 and EN24).

Future management and maintenance of sports pitches

With regards to the sports pitches on the site, the applicants have indicated a willingness to provide assurances, either by condition or S106, that the pitches would be retained and continue to be made available for sports use following the development. We would therefore request that a planning condition is included as part of any planning approval that is granted along the lines of the following Sport England model condition.

Condition B: The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until a Management and Maintenance Scheme for the remaining sports pitches at the CSSC site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, after consultation with Sport England. The Management and Maintenance Scheme shall be for a period of at least 10 years, and shall include management responsibilities and a

maintenance schedule. The measures set out in the approved scheme shall be complied with in full, with effect from commencement of use of the development, and shall include a mechanism for review.

(Reason – To ensure that the sports pitches on the site are managed and maintained to ensure sufficient benefit of the development to sport and to accord with Local Plan Policy C3 and EN24.

Subject to securing the above requirements as part of any planning approval that is granted, Sport England does not wish to object to this application, as we would be satisfied that the proposals would meet Exception E5 of our playing fields policy.

However, if the Council resolves to approve the proposed development without the above requirements being secured then Sport England would wish to object to this application.

Further comments in response to the provision of community use as set out by the agent, letter dated 19th June 2008 – Sport England are pleased to see some good progress has been made. However, as per the Council's leisure services department further details are required, in particular regarding priority for displaced CSSC teams

Revised Comments (23rd October 2008) – I can confirm we do not have any objection to the revised plans. However, we would still wish to see the requirements set out in our letter dated 28th May 2008 secured as part of any planning approval that is granted. Should the Council resolve to approve the proposed development without the requirements contained in our previous letter being secured, then Sport England would wish to object to this application.

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST there are limited or no archaeological implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections on archaeological grounds.

Revised Comments (30/10/08) – The site lies adjacent to an area where aerial photography has revealed an enclosure possibly representing prehistoric activity. It is likely similar remains are located in the proposal area. However, at present insufficient information exists concerning the presence or absence of remains on the site. For this reason, it is recommended that the applicant be asked to provide further information on any archaeological remains on the site prior to the determination of this application. This is likely to require a geophysical survey.

The County archaeologist has subsequently confirmed that this can be achieved through condition.

PARISH COUNCIL – Original comments.

The Parish Council unanimously agreed to oppose the application for the following reason: -

- The proposed Centre is an intrusion in the street scene and not in keeping with the present surrounds and surrounding area. Its location, size and appearance will have a detrimental impact on the residential area and will result in the substantial loss of a very important open aspect within a fully developed area. The proposal would appear to be contrary to your 'Urban Open Space' and 'Recreational Open Space' policies in the Local Plan.

- The proposed two storey Centre building would not be in keeping with the residential and surrounding area. The high level of lighting would exacerbate this, especially as it is proposed to open the centre until 11.00pm, and incorporate large illuminated signage for the Centre.
- There would be significant loss of green field and open aspect from exists at present and a loss of available sports facilities and playing area. This would be made worse by also losing the present indoor bowling facility. These losses would include the second cricket square towards College Way, which is used throughout the season and has been for a considerable number of years; a hockey pitch towards College Way, which for years has been marked out with the proper hockey goalposts and a third football pitch in front of the lit multi-purpose five-a-side hard court area.
- The effects of the additional traffic on College Way and the College Way/Galmington Road junction, especially at Peak times during the day, i.e. school and work time in the mornings and evenings. Its proximity with Pitts Close will cause significant traffic flow problems on a junction that is already very demanding with access to the local Primary School, Shops, Church, Community Hall and Doctor's Surgery. As a measure of the traffic problems that already exist, a controlled crossing was put in the vicinity. The Centre will only exacerbate these problems.
- The proposed entrance/access to the Centre would need an agreed visibility splay, which will require the removal of existing trees. This would create additional traffic safety issues along College Way with the amount of traffic turning left and right off College Way, in order to enter and leave the Centre.
- The Council have in the past discussed with Somerset County Council the possibility of a cycleway/footpath coming from Trull Road to College Way. The Council note that this has now been added and joins the existing footpath beside Fulwood Close. The Council would like to know who owns the land (grass strip) between the Civil Service fence and the footpath, where the two would have to merge and who would be responsible for upgrading the remainder of the footpath into a cycleway/footpath? In addition, the Council would like to know the legal responsibility and future maintenance of the proposed cycleway/footpath, as it is shown inside the security fence and therefore on Civil Service owned land.
- The Council feel that there would be an additional problem created along College Way, because at present there is a barrier preventing cyclists and pedestrians from turning left towards Pitts Close. They have to go right to join the properly installed crossing, which was positioned there to prevent road safety problems opposite the Pitts Close junction (see 4 above). This could be exacerbated if the footpath or cycleway/footpath link is extended towards the entrance to the Sports Centre on the same side of the road.
- The Council would need to be convinced that it was not possible to build the proposed Sports Centre in the same place or close to the existing Sports Club building and believe this requires further detailed consideration.

If however, the application were to be approved, the Council would expect to see a number of conditions imposed, even if they required further discussion with the Parish

Council. These would include: -

- Access to and from the site is of major importance to users of College Way.
- The visual impact of the building on the surrounding area, its positioning would mean the loss of the present open visibility and rare aspect in a fully developed area.
- The choice of building materials, the style and design of the building, and assurances of future control of structural changes and appearance.
- The lighting of the new building and the size and wattage of the lit signage, especially in view of the proposed opening hours for the Centre.
- The hours of business, especially the proposed closing time.
- The protection, as far as possible, of a highly significant site in the Parish.
- Security of the site, with the essential need for a barrier to be installed when the Centre is closed to prevent illegal use of the car park and site. There would also need to be further information on the type, materials and colour of the proposed security fence around the site.
- (Revised response, 02/12/08, following discussion at planning committee and in response to amendments submitted). The Parish Council agreed to the two proposed changes, (1) to take the hard court lit area out of this application and to include it in the Queens College application (52/2008/034) and (2) to remove altogether the fin beside the front door entrance to the Sports Centre. However, the following observations remain valid.
 1. Further detailed information is required on the proposed footpath/cycleway link, including: -
 - how it merges with the access road from Trull Road into the car park and how it will deal with the interaction with cars/cyclists/pedestrians
 - whether or not there will be proper segregation for cyclists/pedestrians from the entrance to the car park and the present sports club building
 - who will upgrade the existing footpath from College Way to Fulwood Close into a cycle/footpath in order to link to the proposed new cycleway/footpath
 - how the new cycleway/footpath will merge safely with the existing section at Fulwood Close
 - how the cycleway/footpath will merge safely with College Way
 - how the proposed footpath link from the end of the cycleway/footpath at the College Way end will lead into the Sports Centre and will there be any measures to stop cyclists and pedestrians from crossing College Way at this point to prevent possible accidents, as there is an official crossing point further down College Way from Pitts Close?
 2. The Parish Council understand that the present football pitch on the opposite side of the fence in front of the existing sports club building is to be reduced in size, in order to accommodate the proposed new cycleway/footpath. The Council would like you to ensure that the football pitch still meets the FA

minimum required length and width, together with the required space for spectators on the touchline, for adults football, as the pitch is already small than other football pitches used for adult matches.

3. The Council support the complete removal of the proposed projecting wing at the entrance to the Sports Centre and the removal of the original cladding for the proposed cladding.
4. What sort of security fence will go around the building? The Council would like to see the fencing along the College Way frontage match the existing security in front of the Queens College premises along College Way.
5. The Council feel that there should be a secure gate to the main entrance to the Sports Centre, which should be locked when the Centre is closed to ensure that no vehicles can gain access to the car park area and to maintain adequate security of the site.
6. Has all the highway issues along College Way and the entrance to the site been approved by the Highway Authority, including additional double yellow lines to prevent cars parking either side of the entrance to the Sports Centre?
7. Have the required legal agreements been completed with Queens College for the shared use of the land and Queens College facilities?
8. The Council note that the hard court lit area has now come out of this application and has been included in the Queens College application 52/2008/034. As outlined in 7 above, the Council would wish to see this facility included in the legal agreement for shared use with Queens College and Taunton Deane Borough Council. This hard court is presently well used by outside groups and organisations and should still available for the wider community use. This point has also been made in the Council's comments on application 52/2008/034.

CIVIC SOCIETY – Revised response (31.10.08). The Civic Society expresses concern because of the landscape impact and the effect on the character of College Way, together with doubts over the viability of the proposed business.

What is proposed appears to be a large shed, in gross outlines not unlike warehouse buildings found on business parks. This is completely at odds with the residential and retail development along College Way, and because of its extra height cannot be said to relate to the existing single storey club buildings.

It is not clear and certain that the proposed facility will offer any benefits to the general (non-Civil Service) public as this depends on it having 'surplus capacity' (para 4.1 of the Design & Access statement). Even if it does it may not be attractive on price grounds compared to competition elsewhere in the town. If it were to offer competitive public prices it would benefit a quadrant of the town that has no such local facilities.

However, Taunton has a considerable number of similar establishments, all of which depend on their patrons' discretionary expenditure, and those patrons are now experiencing financial uncertainty. Para 4.13 of the additional information submitted in April 08 (doc ref PPL/112) indicates that in addition to the current annual fee Civil Service member may (will?) have to pay a monthly fee as well. This is likely to cause

some existing members to resign, even if the new facilities cause others to join.

We therefore suggest that the possibility that the venture may fail must be considered. If so, what will happen to the site? Will Galmington be left with what will then appear to be an unsightly white elephant – and will the remaining sports field be lost because ‘development’ has occurred and the site can be considered brownfield?

If it will not be of benefit to local residents (as mentioned above), the net effects may be negative, as it involves a reduction in playing field space and the loss of the present indoor bowls facility.

Before the application was amended we were concerned that the external materials used for the building, and particularly those parts above the ground floor, did not blend in with the surroundings and had a very adverse impact when seen from College Way. We consider that in most respects the amended plans do slightly reduce the visual impact and will blend with some of the Queens College buildings to the east.

However, the proposed site is still very obtrusive, and a development much closer to the scarp (in other words, just below the existing club house) would be less obtrusive from College Way and from the east. Such a site would not have much visual impact on housing to the north because of the substantial screen of trees on that part of the northern edge of the field. We do not feel that this would necessarily conflict with access from College Way. Should the business fail this site might be more easily reused (e.g. by Queens College) without threat to the remaining sports field.

We object to the very tall ‘wing’ that is now proposed as an ‘announcement to entrance and added relief to elevation’. This appears to be a piece of architectural whimsy (materials unspecified) that is simply there to display duplicate signage. (Planning Officer comment – this element has now been omitted).

If the application is approved we would request that the following conditions are imposed: (1) the entrance wing be deleted (2) strict controls be imposed on signage, car parking lighting etc (3) if the field is to continue as a landing ground for air ambulances, that a clear access to the field be maintained at all times. We are concerned that parking may obstruct this – there is no access way through the car park to the pitch edge, and we see no evidence of gates in the ball-stop fence shown on the site plan.

REPRESENTATIONS

10 letters of OBJECTION have been received raising the following issues:- it would be sensible to look at using local buses or extending routes – please do not encourage further use of cars which encourages weight gain and causes pollution, Council should use their influence to extend public transport times; increase traffic congestion at the junction of College Way and Pitts Close which will be detrimental in terms of highway safety on what is a major route for cars, cyclists, delivery vehicles, bus route and emergency route to the hospital from helicopter landing in the Civil Service playing fields together with access to local facilities; it will exacerbate parking on College Way; traffic survey flawed as its counts are taken after the school run and do not reflect real life traffic conditions; parking – what measures will take place to prevent parking on the roadside?; no consideration given to building on the existing site and access gained via Hoveland Drive; being open until 11pm will be a nuisance and impact considerably

on the elderly residents of Blythe Court – this would interfere with a person's right to peaceful enjoyment of their property – legal action may be sought; concern that the development should not cause the loss of the protected Poplar trees bordering College Way which provides one of the most attractive visual aspects of the area; no reference made to the bungalows in Pitts Close which will be impacted upon and the proposed centre would be visually obtrusive; inappropriate for a commercial use in a predominantly residential area; there are other established sport and fitness facilities within Taunton Deane – given existing economic downturn may provide unviable and concern regarding the re-use of any redundant industrial type building; another established sports facility has recently closed in Taunton; Strategic Leisure Ltd indicates that the health and fitness market may be saturated; the site will not have adequate security; it will lead to people cutting through private land of adjacent flats; scheme should be referred back to the developer as the site next to the clubhouse (brownfield) is preferred and would not reduce the size of the sports field; the building is of an industrial type out of keeping with the residential location; it will cause noise and disturbance to residents; local residents not consulted or site notice posted; contrary to Local Plan Policy EN24 (Urban Open Space) and C3 (Recreational Open Space); current users of the outside sports facilities may be forced to pay higher commercial rates – reducing participation for those on low incomes; existing facilities have been underused due to lack of information; object to opening times; removal of screening which has previously been sited there for a reason; emergency helicopter service will suffer because of commercial demands to let the pitches at a much increased volumes, therefore reducing 'landing slots' and the waiting ambulances may be caught in the traffic chaos generated by the facility; no community involvement from the developer prior to submitting this major application; still no assurances about the plans for the existing Civil Service Sports Club site; concern regarding management of the site to ensure there is no trouble from young people in and around the vicinity of the site.

In response to the publicity and consultation process following amendments to the scheme an 7 letters of OBJECTION have been received reiterating that previous concerns remain valid and question whether the Council's concerns have been addressed; continued revisions until passed; proposal is a health/social club without benefit to general public; the land would be better used leasing it to Queens College so there be no ugly blot on the landscape; noise and disturbance; viability; plans appear to show fencing on the boundary with Hoveland Drive except for a large opening from the playing field onto the footpath from Hoveland Drive to College Way – this would given open access from this path to the field as well as the cyclepath – this would give concerns to security for both CSSC and Queens College; allow for dog exercising on the playing field; allow for increased parking in Hoveland Drive and Fulwood Close by people accessing the field, if the 2.0m fence was relocated to the playing field side of the cyclepath then no gap in the fence would be required.

5 letters of SUPPORT have been received. Summary of comments:- despite the lack of information available on the website support the proposal; further enhancement to the Galmington Area; boost to the area – the sports facilities must be retained bearing in mind Comeytrowe/Trull has a large population; as a retired civil servant I have no objections (letter notes the representee lives 20 miles from Taunton).

In response to the publicity and consultation process following amendments to the scheme an additional 3 letters raising NO OBJECTION / SUPPORT to the proposal have been received subject to the football, cricket clubs using these facilities being allowed to do so under the new proposals. The existing entrance is unsuitable and

Hoveland Drive would not be a viable option as it already serves 150 dwellings; the proposed facilities will provide for the younger generation.

PLANNING POLICIES

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development,
PPG17 - Sport and Recreation,
RPG10 - Regional Planning Guidance for the South West,
STR1 - Sustainable Development,
M1 - TDBCLP - Non-residential Developments,
STR4 - Development in Towns,
S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,
M2 - TDBCLP - Non-residential Car Parking Outside Taun & Well,
M3 - TDBCLP - Non-residential Development & Transport Provision,
M5 - TDBCLP - Cycling,
C3 - TDBCLP - Protection of Recreational Open Space,
C5 - TDBCLP - Sports Centres,
EN6 - TDBCLP - Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards & Hedgerows,
EN23 - TDBCLP - Areas of High Archaeological Potential,
EN24 - TDBCLP - Urban Open Space,
S&ENPP49 - S&ENP - Transport Requirements of New Development,
S&ENPP48 - S&ENP - Access and Parking,
S&ENPP21 - S&ENP - Town Centre Uses,
TCS2 - RPG 10 TCS2 - Culture, Leisure and Sport,
TRAN1 - RPG 10 TRAN 1 - Reducing the need to Travel,
TRAN10 - RPG 10 TRAN 10 - Walking, Cycling & Public Transport,
S&ENPP37 - S&ENP - Facilities for Sport and Recreation,
S&ENPP44 - S&ENP - Cycling,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The application seeks a new sports centre for the Civil Service Sports Club which will also be available to non-members of the CSSC, i.e. members of the local community, through the sports club membership scheme. The proposed building is intended to be sited at the College Way end of the site, rather than replacing the existing clubhouse building, and includes provision of a new access from College Way, the local distributor road. Members previously indicated that in principle the proposal was acceptable subject to addressing the issues raised. The report will outline the main revisions to the proposal.

Design and Impact upon protected open space

In order to reduce the prominence of the building in the street scene, the siting of the building has been set further into the site, albeit marginally. Members raised concern to the appearance of the building, in particular the materials. In response, and following discussion with officers, the design has been amended to incorporate additional fenestration to break up the appearance of the building and the external surface is now proposed to be cedar clad to provide a softer appearance. In design terms it is difficult to design a building that is both modern and attractive given the nature of the internal uses involved. However, it is considered the revised design does represent a positive response. The landscape officer has reiterated concerns to the principle and impact of

development in this location, but accepts that should Members be minded to grant permission the landscaping scheme in itself is acceptable.

PPG17 states that the recreational quality of open spaces can be eroded by insensitive development or incremental loss of the site. In considering planning applications - either within or adjoining open space - local authorities should weigh any benefits being offered to the community against the loss of open space that will occur.

Para 10 of PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation 2002 states that local authorities should:

1. avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain or enhance the character of open spaces;
2. ensure that open spaces do not suffer from increased overlooking, traffic flows or other encroachment;
3. protect and enhance those parts of the rights of way network that might benefit open space; and
4. consider the impact of any development on biodiversity and nature conservation.

The building is located within the urban open space designation covered by policy EN24. This states that new development will not be permitted unless the urban open space is surplus to needs or the development is compatible with the functions of the open space, would not impair the ability to provide these functions and is of an appropriate scale, siting and design to minimise the impact on the open space.

The playing field provides an area for archery, two football pitches and two cricket pitches. This recreational open space is also protected under policy C3 of the Local Plan. In this policy proposals should not be permitted unless there is an excess of good quality recreational facilities that would be lost, sufficient to meet local demand; or the development provides a recreational or community benefit greater than the long term recreational value of the facility that would be lost; or equivalent provision in a convenient location is made. The issue therefore is one of whether the community benefit of the indoor and retained outdoor facilities is sufficient to outweigh the loss of the playing field uses such as the second cricket square.

Leisure Services, following a series of meetings with the agent, are now satisfied that requirements of the S106 to retain and maintain the existing sports facilities and provide alternative provision through a 'Joint Use Agreement' are sufficient to compensate for the loss of the actual sports provision in this case. Sport England, subject to the imposition of conditions or S106, as set out within the consultation response, does not raise any objection to the proposal. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would enable the CSSC to provide purpose built sporting facilities to serve both their members and the local community whilst retaining, in large, the existing outdoor sporting facilities.

Sequential Test

The applicant has submitted a planning statement which looks at the sequential test necessary as the proposal is likely to be a major traffic generator and the site lies outside the central area. This is in line with both PPS6 and the requirements of the Local Plan policies C5 and EC10. The policy concern, raised during the previous

application, is that the test undertaken has not looked at all town centre sites and when these are looked at there are sites available which could house a sports centre use. The applicant argues that they have a specific business model which looks to incorporate the existing playing field facilities into a scheme to ensure their retention and that desegregation onto a smaller site to provide indoor facilities would ignore the requirements to provide for outdoor sports. Financial viability of quality outdoor sports it is claimed can only be provided by linking the facilities on the one site. Relocation of the entire facility would require 3 hectares which could not be found in a more sustainable location. The proposed site is adjacent to the existing local centre and benefits from good local transport links and is considered an acceptable alternative. It is a location that is well related to residential areas and does not have a similar facility nearby on this side of town other than at Castle School.

The issue of viability has also been raised during the consultation process, particularly given the current economic climate. In response the agent has reiterated that it is the current financial challenges facing the CSSC that has driven the proposed development, in order to remain a viable long term proposition. The proposed development will provide both indoor and outdoor sports facilities, available to the community through membership, in an area of Taunton that currently does not possess such facilities. Whilst the long term future of the site can never be guaranteed, the proposal is responding to the requirements of the CSSC and would serve the community, whilst the S106 would ensure the retention and continued provision of the sports pitches on the site.

Highway Implications

The Highway Authority has attended a number of meetings with the developer in order to address the highway concerns previously raised. The outcome being that in principle there would be no objection subject to suitably worded conditions requiring information to be submitted and works carried out in accordance with highway requirements. The revised formal consultation response is still awaited and Members will be updated at the Planning Committee.

Other matters

The agent has confirmed that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) will be utilised for this site in order to manage drainage at source, with the aim to detain run-off and release it slowly into the ground. The full drainage details have not yet been drawn but it is considered that it is reasonable to condition this element.

The continued use of the sports pitches for the air ambulance has been raised as a concern by local residents. The agent has confirmed that it remains the intention to allow the air ambulance to continue to use the playing field. The views of the Highway Authority are awaited which may or may not raise any implications of the proposed development on access arrangement to and from the site, in relation to such use.

There has been concern from local residents regarding noise, due to opening hours, and potential anti-social behaviour from the use of the car park at night. In terms of opening hours, there has been no comment from the Environmental Health department, and it is considered that the proposal would not have such a harmful impact upon amenity as to warrant a refusal. In terms of security to the building and its parking area this would be a matter for the owner of the site, however details of any fencing or

physical security measures can be imposed as a condition.

Conclusion

Since the application was last put before Members, considerable work has gone into bringing forward a comprehensive re-development of the existing CSSC site and the proposed CSSC sports centre which addresses the previous concerns to the application. As such a more balanced assessment can now be made taking into consideration the longer term future of the entire site. Whilst it is accepted that the proposal would have an impact on the street scene, nevertheless, it is considered the revision design and in particular the use of timber cladding would provide a softer appearance, which together with the existing tree screening and landscape mitigation would reduce its impact. Moreover, it is considered that the proposed building would enable the CSSC to provide purpose built indoor sports facilities, which would also benefit the local community, without adversely affecting the existing outdoor sports facilities on the site. As such it is recommended that subject to the completion of a S106 requirement and conditions set out below that permission be granted.

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Subject to the views of the Highway Authority and completion of the S106 requiring the following or as amended by the Council's solicitor, (1) the external playing pitches, comprising 2 external winter sports pitches, 1 multi use all weather court and 1 cricket pitch, be maintained, available with changing facilities and only used for the purposes of outdoor sports (2) subject to the requirements of CSSC's for the use of the sports pitches and changing rooms, any surplus availability will be offered to local community groups to be agreed between the Council and CSSC at a rate comparable to the rate charged by the Council for similar facilities (3) CSSC not to occupy the development until a Joint Use Scheme has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority – this will provide a scheme to allow for the use of an alternative cricket pitch which would be lost as a result of the development, The DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT MANAGER & CHAIR be authorised to grant PERMISSION subject to the following conditions: - time limit, landscaping, highways, materials, archaeology, details of boundary fencing / security measures along site frontage, lighting and drainage (SUDS). Restriction to use as a Sports Centre and for no other purpose in Use Class D2. Submission of a management and maintenance scheme for the remaining sports pitches. Tree protection during construction works.

The proposed development would meet the requirements of PPG17 ' Planning for open space, sport and recreation' in that the range and quality fo facilities would be enhanced and there would be no significant loss of amenity to neighbouring properties or residential uses. The proposal would improve upon existing facilities and promote better use of open and recreational spaces and is therefore acceptable. The design, siting and materials of the sports centre building is considered acceptable. The proposal does not therefore conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2, M1, M2, M3, M5 C3, C5, EN6, EN23 nor EN24 and material considerations do not indicate otherwise.

Recommended Decision: Approval

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. (i) Before any part of the permitted development is commenced, a landscaping scheme, which shall include details of the species, siting and numbers to be planted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

(ii) The scheme shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development, or as otherwise extended with the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

(iii) For a period of five years after the completion of each landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S2.

3. No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out and thereafter retained as such, in accordance with the approved details as above, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the existing building in accordance with Policy S2 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

4. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out at all times in accordance with the agreed scheme or some other scheme that may otherwise be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the preservation of archaeological remains in accordance with Policy [11] [12] [13] of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, Policy [EN21] [EN22] [EN23] of the Taunton Deane Local Plan (delete which ever is not relevant) and advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance note 16.

5. Prior to the use hereby permitted commencing a security barrier to the car park shall be provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To minimize the impact of the development on residential amenity and in the interests of security in accordance with Policy S1 and Policy S2 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

6. Details of any external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the use hereby permitted commences and the building is occupied. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained as such.

Reason: To minimize the impact of the development in accordance with Policy S1(E) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

7. Before development commences (including site clearance and any other preparatory works) a scheme for the protection of trees to be retained shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such a scheme shall include a plan showing the location of the protective fencing, and shall specify the type of protective fencing, all in accordance with BS 5837:2005. Such fencing shall be erected prior to commencement of any other site operations and at least two working days notice shall be given to the Local Planning Authority that it has been erected. It shall be maintained and retained for the full duration of works or until such time as agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. No activities whatsoever shall take place within the protected areas without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Note: The protective fencing should be as specified at Chapter 9 and detailed in figures 2 and 3 of BS 5837:2005.

Reason: To ensure the enhancement of the development by the retention of existing trees and natural features during the construction phase in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S2 and EN8.

8. Before any part of the permitted development is commenced, details of all boundary walls, fences or hedges forming part of the development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and any such wall, fence or hedge so approved shall be erected/planted before any such part of the development to which it relates takes place.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and

distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S2.

9. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until a Management and Maintenance Scheme for the remaining sports pitches at the CSSC site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, after consultation with Sport England. The Management and Maintenance Scheme shall be for a period of at least 10 years, and shall include management responsibilities and a maintenance schedule. The measures set out in the approved scheme shall be complied with in full, with effect from commencement of use of the development, and shall include a mechanism for review.

Reason: To ensure that the sports pitches on the site are managed and maintained to ensure sufficient benefit of the development to sport and to accord with Local Plan Policy C3 and EN24.

10. The premises shall be used as a sports centre, with crèche, café and sports bar ancillary to the use of the building as a sports centre – to the extent as set out within the accompanying application, and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Class D2 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the building remains as a sports facility in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies C3 & EN24.

11. No development shall commence until details of the proposed means of surface water disposal have been submitted to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily drained in accordance with PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development and Planning Policy 25 – Development and Flood Risk.

Notes for compliance

1. Condition 11 of this planning permission requires the submission of proposals for a scheme of surface water drainage. As detailed within the submission, the LPA would expect sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) be utilised to deal with surface water drainage.

Surface water run-off should be controlled as near to its source as possible through a sustainable drainage approach to surface water management (SUDS). SUDS are an approach to managing surface water run-off which seeks to mimic natural drainage systems and retain water on or near the site as opposed to traditional drainage approaches which involve piping water off site as quickly as possible. SUDS involve a range of techniques including soakaways, infiltration trenches, permeable pavements, grassed swales, ponds and wetlands. SUDS offer significant advantages over conventional piped

drainage systems in reducing flood risk by attenuating the rate and quantity of surface water run-off from a site, promoting groundwater recharge, and improving water quality and amenity.

Further information on SUDS can be found in Planning Policy Statement PPS 25.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.

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