

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th February 2009

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/1945/08/F - IMPINGTON
Extension to Sports Centre at Impington Village College, New Road
for Impington Village College

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 6th February 2009 (Major Application)

Notes:

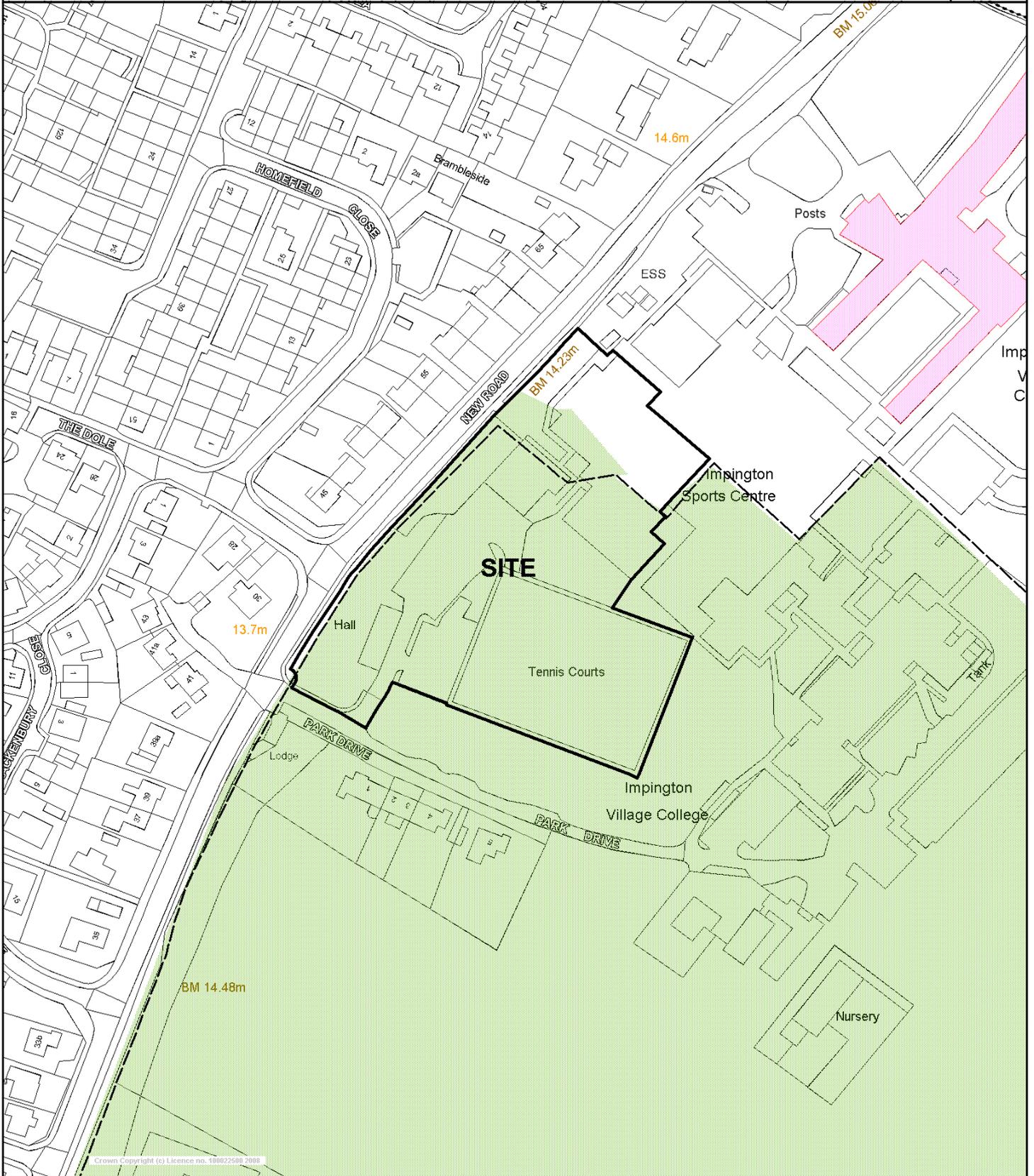
This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because it is a departure to the development plan.

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. Impington Village College is a Grade I Listed building. The Listing description notes:

‘Comprehensive school, originally designed as a village college in 1938 by Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry. Gault brick with red brick and blue tile details; flat roofs. One storey. Wide central block with single depth classroom wing to south with open corridor, and parallel to it but to north side an adult wing planned on gentle curve with enclosed corridor and tall metal framed windows to main facade. Projecting assembly hall to east of main block has splayed walls and rising roof with wide canopy over main entrances. Recent additions by County Architects Department. N Pevsner, Buildings of Cambs and Isle of Ely p413, p558; Architectural Review 1938.’
2. The development site itself is to the south, away from the listed building, adjacent to a complex of modern school buildings. It lies on land between the existing pool building and Park Drive to the south. The site incorporates a scout hut, tennis courts and car park, which are to the south of the main complex of built development.
3. The western site boundary is marked by a strong line of mature trees, protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and a high brick wall to the New Road frontage. The northern site boundary abuts the existing sports hall and swimming pool, onto which the proposals are to extend. To the east are further school buildings. Beyond which are school playing fields.
4. The site is within the Green Belt and outside of the village framework, which it abuts.
5. The site is accessed off New Road via Park Drive; a minor residential road that leads to the further car parks, buildings and playing fields to the east via New Road.



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Scale 1/1711 Date 22/1/2009

Centre = 544477 E 263063 N

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6. The full planning application, received on 7th November 2008, proposes extensions totalling 880m² to the existing sports hall and pool buildings at Impington Village College to provide new health and fitness facilities to be used in association with the existing sports hall, gym and pool. The extensions comprise:
 - (a) A first floor extension providing a gym over what is an existing single storey activity room and bar to the south of the sports hall,
 - (b) A two-storey extension linking the existing sports hall to the new facilities providing: a new entrance area, café and staff rest room at ground floor and seating area, assessment room and gym office in association with the new gym, and
 - (c) A single-storey extension to the existing pool to provide wet changing rooms and a thermal relaxation area.
7. The extensions are designed with flat, zinc and sedum (green) roofs over stone gabion walls or walls finished of brick, white render or zinc.
8. The proposals include reconfiguring the existing car park to provide 9 additional spaces and 100 cycle parking spaces.
9. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and a Supporting Planning Statement.

Planning History

10. The site has an extensive planning history relating to its use as a school. Previous applications relevant to this application are those for the existing sports facilities, mainly developed during the 1990s:
 - (a) **S/0215/94/F** Swimming Pool Building Together With Changing/Plant Facilities (No Objections) (Approved by CCC).
 - (b) **S/1934/93/LB** Demolition of Gate Pier And Part of Wall For Widening of Access, Rebuilding in Revised Position (Approved).
 - (c) **S/1670/93/F** Sports Hall and Changing Facilities (No Objections).
 - (d) **S/0993/80/F** Sectional Building for Scout and Guide Activities (Approved).

Planning Policy

11. *East of England Plan 2008:*
CSR3: Green Belt

“In making provision for housing, employment and all other development a green belt should be maintained around Cambridge to define the extent of urban growth in accordance with the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt which are to:

 - (a) Preserve the character of Cambridge as a dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;
 - (b) Maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge’s setting; and
 - (c) Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.”
12. *South Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2007*
ST/1 Green Belt

13. *South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies 2007*
DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development
DP/3 Development Criteria
DP/7 Development Frameworks
GB/1 Development in the Green Belt
GB/2 Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt
GB/5 Recreation in the Green Belt
NE/1 Energy Efficiency
NE/3 Renewable Technologies in New Development
NE/6 Biodiversity
NE/9 Water and Drainage Infrastructure
CH/4 Development Within the Curtilage or Setting of a Listed Building
TR/1 Planning for More Sustainable Travel
TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards
TR/3 Mitigating Travel Impact

Consultation

14. **Impington Parish Council** – Makes no recommendation but comments:
- (a) 'Provision of cycle parking applauded;
 - (b) Interesting design, a visual improvement;
 - (c) Concern over safety of parking area near scout/guide hut with impact on pedestrian access for children and parents;
 - (d) Parking layout felt to be unrealistic with concern over capacity due to cramped layout. Narrow and tight areas between rows could result in loss of one space to each row. Noted parking occasionally inadequate now at peak times'.
15. **The Local Highway Authority** – Comments:
- (a) 'Prior to commencement of the development visibility splays with dimensions of 2.4 metres by 70 metres as measured from and along the nearside edge of the carriageway shall be provided on both sides of the access in full. The area within each splay shall be kept clear of any obstruction exceeding 600mm in height at all times.
 - (b) The Highway Authority would request that a pedestrian and cycle (no dig) access is implemented through to the bicycle parking from the existing footway along New Road and not through the combined vehicular access.
 - (c) Please request that the applicant provide a method statement relating to the process of demolition and any effects this may have on the adopted public highway. In particular reference should be made to control of debris, mud & dust, pedestrian & vehicle movements and the control of contractors parking.
16. **Landscape Design Officer** – 'The wall and mature tree belt form the visual boundary along New Road rather than the buildings behind them, so I do not feel that the proposed new buildings will have an unacceptable visual impact on the street. There is adequate space between the proposed buildings and the wall for the existing tree belt to remain a long term feature.
17. Although the design and access statement states that the new buildings do not affect any trees, the car parking certainly does. I would expect to see a tree condition survey and details of any trees that would be removed so that the impact on New Road can be assessed and mitigation planned. [The Tree Officer] would need to advise on whether a no dig solution is unacceptable. In her absence I am confident

that a method statement prepared by a competent Arboricultural consultant for her assessment will be required'.

18. **Design and Access Forum** – Comments to be reported verbally.

19. **Sport England** – It supports the scheme and its comments include:

1. Notes the need for this facility and that it results in benefits to the local community.
2. It suggests several factors that should be taken into account in justifying a departure from the development plan:
 - (a) The identified local and strategic need for this facility
 - (b) The strong partnership support for this project from the public sector
 - (c) The relatively minor impact on the openness of the green belt in this location given the existing footprint of buildings on the site, the relatively small increase in overall footprint of these buildings and the fact that the height of the extension is still below the existing roof height of the adjoining sports hall
 - (d) The precedent of other recent planning permissions on this site and nearby, particularly the new 2 storey teaching block to the rear of the school
 - (e) The fact that there are no possible alternative sitings for this extension within this complex
 - (f) The fact that the overall scale of the proposal has been kept as small as possible
 - (g) The arbitrary nature of the Green Belt boundary in this location, passing as it does through the centre of the Impington College site, which in turn confirms that an extension of this nature will not materially affect the openness of the Green Belt, or conflict with the reasons for including land within a Green Belt (as set out within Para. 1.5 of PPG2).
3. It believes there is a strong case for normal Green Belt policy to be set aside in this instance.
4. With regard to playing fields policy, this proposal only affects a limited area of land within the buildings envelope of the college and only affects land that could not readily be used for sports pitches due to the restricted dimensions. The proposal also has no detrimental impact on any other sports facilities within the site.
5. The proposals themselves relate to indoor sports facilities for which there is an identified local and strategic need, which will greatly enhance sports facility provision on this site and thus sustain the long term viability of the community facilities on this site.
6. It is satisfied that the proposal meets exception E5 of the above policy, in that the proposal is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, where the benefit to the development of sport would outweigh the detriment caused by the potential loss of playing field.
7. It supports this application, notwithstanding the fact that there may be subsequent alterations to the design details of the scheme following a recent meeting between the applicants, their agents and the funding partners.

20. **Urban Design Officer** – Supports the scheme, commenting:

1. “The existing sports centre has been developed in an adhoc fashion over the past 20-30 years. The building consists of a large sports hall, small sports hall, 25m swimming pool. The overall massing is single storey and varies in height from 4.5m to 8m. The current proposal proposes to build a new entrance foyer with a viewing area/café, fitness area and changing rooms to the west and south-west of the existing pool.
2. This new building is advantageous in creating a –
 - (a) New frontage to the existing structure giving it a new and contemporary image with its well thought out architecture and materials.
 - (b) It also resolves the existing roofing problems of the youth centre.
 - (c) And mainly retains the building line towards the green belt.
 - (d) The incorporation of green roof and other sustainable features are to be applauded and help in creating a respectable and sustainable community building.
 - (e) Although the architecture and materials create a more interesting format to the structure, the placement of certain activities within the new structure could be refined further. The viewing area/ café would have an added function if placed between the pool and tennis court. Similarly the grassed area between the tennis courts and the building line could be used for informal seating/viewing area created through well designed landscaping. These two viewing areas if laid next to each other will allow a better interchange and spillage of activities.
3. Overall in terms of scale, massing and design the Urban Design Team feels that the current proposal does not effect adjoining properties in a negative way. It rather enhances the existing structure”.

21. **English Heritage** – comments to be reported verbally.

22. **Historic Buildings Officer** – Comments:

‘The existing sport centre is sited to the southwest of the grade I listed building and comprises a swimming pool, activity area, sports hall, changing area and plant rooms. All the buildings are in effect single storey but vary in height. The proposal is to extend the pool area to the south-west to provide changing facilities and build a first floor over the activity room and entrance to provide a gym and seating area.

The extensions will be on the south-west side of the existing complex i.e. away from the grade I listed building. However the impact on the setting of the listed building cannot be fully assessed as there is no proposed north-east elevation, only a section, drawing no. SP A201. Additional information is required including a proposed elevation that includes the existing buildings and a computer visual of the view from the front of the listed building.

In terms of design there are some concerns particularly the use of gabions, as stone is not a material associated with this area and the introduction of the balcony’.

23. **Sports Development Officer – Queries:**

- (a) Whether the 'Thermal Room' could be put to better community use by allowing access from the corridor, rather than just from the pool? This is a decent space that could potentially accommodate keep fit/pilates/yoga etc. classes.
- (b) Whether the employee WC is necessary and what WC will cafe users use during the school day?
- (c) Is 3.18m ceiling height in the fitness suite sufficient to make it a pleasant space? This is linked to some concerns about the capacity of the air circulation system and the south facing sun coming into the room i.e. will the fitness suite be cool enough in summer?
- (d) In relation to management:
 - o It needs to be made clear that the fitness suite will also have 'pay and play' usage. This is a SCDC requirement and should be reflected in the application.
 - o The open hours need further discussion – it is certainly expected that the fitness suite be open later than 8pm mid week.
- (e) Whether the cycle parking can be covered?

Representations

24. No representations have been received.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

25. The key issues in determining this application are whether the development is appropriate in the Green Belt, design, impact on the setting of the Listed Building, car and cycle parking, vehicular and pedestrian access, trees, public access and whether there are any very special circumstances to outweigh any harm by reason of inappropriateness in the Green Belt and other harm caused by the development.

Green Belt – inappropriate development

26. The site is within the Green Belt. The proposals seek development that is not appropriate, as defined in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 2: 'Green Belts', i.e. it does not provide essential facilities to support outdoor recreation, as the sports facilities to be provided relate largely to indoor sports. It is by definition therefore, harmful to the Green Belt.

Other harm – Green Belt

27. The development must be considered in terms of the purposes of the Green Belt. The proposals include built development that will reduce the openness of the Green Belt. The extensions, although reasonably large, will however be seen in the context of the college campus, against the backdrop of existing, substantial buildings. The design has sought to minimise the visual impact by keeping the height of extensions to that of the existing sports hall or lower and through the use of materials such as zinc cladding and sedum.
28. They do not significantly harm the purposes of the Green Belt as the buildings are on previously developed land that is well related to the village of Impington and will not detract from the green edge to the village, in part provided by the college's own sports fields.

Other harm

29. Several elements in the design of the building are of concern. The gabion wall is not considered to be appropriate to the setting of the Grade I Listed school building. The application documents simply state that these will be filled with recycled materials (stone or brick). The architect has also indicated that this is preferred on grounds that it is cost effective, energy efficient and sustainable. An update will be provided at the meeting, as discussions are on-going about this element.
30. Although the balcony has been flagged as of concern, this is understood to be of less concern, being fairly light weight in appearance. The effectiveness of this to provide solar shading for the first floor gym on this south facing elevation is also a matter of some discussion.
31. Overall the building will, subject to the use of appropriate materials, not unduly impact on the setting of the Listed Building.
32. Concerns relating to the internal layout of the facility have been raised. The application proposals are the result of discussions with the college. The architect acknowledges that the layout is not ideal. However it is dictated by the need to separate public and school entrance, provide wet changing facilities off the pool and to provide a spectator area (café/viewing area) for the pool. The layout is acceptable in planning terms.
33. It is difficult to ascertain the required car parking to serve this development as car and cycle parking exist already on the site to serve the school and existing sports centre. Based on the additional total floorspace of the sports facility that will result (2030m² total, 880m² additional floorarea) no extra spaces would be required. However taking the overall floorspace a total of 92 car parking spaces would be required by current standards. The Design and Access Statement (para. 8.9) states that a travel plan has been updated and notes that the site is readily accessible by public transport, foot and cycle. Due to the patterns of usage it is likely that car parking will not be a problem throughout the course of a day.
34. Insufficient provision has been made for disabled users' car parking, with only 2 spaces allocated.
35. The layout submitted does not include adequate turning areas.
36. It is noted that cycle parking proposed exceeds the standard required (82 spaces required, 100 proposed). Details of how these spaces are to be covered are awaited and can be conditioned.
37. The Local Highway Authority's comments are noted and a plan detailing visibility splays of 2.4m by 70m requested, however the access was improved in the 1990s and this is unlikely to be an issue.
38. The Parish Council's concerns regarding pedestrian access through the car park and Local Highway's request to create a pedestrian/cycle route through from New Road are also noted. To create a pedestrian path from Park Drive is likely to be impractical, and having a route from New Road would result in the need to provide a path through an area of protected trees or to break through the curtilage wall. This is not supported by Conservation Officers. A route already exists to the north west of the sports hall from the main entrance road to the school. Pedestrians do and will continue to move through a car park; this is not unusual.

39. A revised layout plan has been requested addressing the layout issues in relation to turning and a travel plan can be secured through planning condition.
40. The architect has confirmed that foundations to accommodate the first floor extension will involve piling. These should not affect trees; however suitable safe guarding conditions will be added to ensure that the detailed design is agreed by the Tree officer to ensure no damage is caused to the protected frontage trees. All trees are to remain and as such tree protection measures may also be required

Very special circumstances

41. The applicant has put forward a case of very special circumstances including:
- (a) The buildings will create a defined frontage that rationalises the group of buildings and their appearance from the Green Belt, enhancing the edge of the Green Belt.
 - (b) The new facilities will provide affordable fitness opportunities for the residents of Impington and Histon as 'Pay and play' is proposed – noting that other facilities at the Barn (Girton) and The Holiday Inn (Histon) are only available on a membership basis.
 - (c) The new facilities will enable the South Cambridgeshire Physical Activity Strategy 2004 – 2007 recommendations to be met as it will improve health, increase physical activity for all children, provides out of school hours participation in physical activity, and increase opportunities for people with disabilities.
 - (d) Accords with Sport England's policy to unlock the potential of school sports facilities by providing dual use, curricular opportunities, widening access to the local community, and helping to place schools at the centre of community life.
 - (e) Meets the requirements of South Cambridgeshire District Council's 'Interim Dual Use Sports facility Strategy' (July 1999) by providing dual use facilities that serve as a local leisure centre. It identified an appropriate level of facilities that for Impington Village College required including, amongst others, fitness suites, staff office, spectator / social area and community changing areas.
 - (f) Strong local support is demonstrated through feedback from a community survey revealing:
 - o Of existing users of the centre: 98% were in favour of the fitness studio being built, 84.7 % were interested in joining the fitness studio and 70% would like an option to use the swimming pool.
 - o Of the wider community who are not current users: 97% were in favour of the fitness studio being built, 89% were interested in joining the fitness studio, 78% were not currently members of a fitness club and 78% would like an option to use the swimming pool.
 - (g) Impington sports Centre is an established business with over 100,000 visitors per year, and is well known locally and regionally.
 - (h) It provides activities for older adults and those people returning to a more active lifestyle in the local community.
 - (i) It will provide facilities to enable them to participate in Fitness 4 health exercise referral scheme and the Heart Watch Cardiac Rehabilitation sessions which local residents have to travel out of the area to take part in at present.
42. Collectively I consider that the above considerations do amount to very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, by way of inappropriateness and loss of openness.

Departure

43. I do not consider that the application needs to be referred to the Secretary of State, as under The Town and Country Planning (Green Belt) Direction 2005 only development over 1000m² or that which by reason of its scale, nature or location would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. This application proposal is considered not to fall within either category.

Recommendation

44. Subject to resolving the design matters and receipt of a revised block plan, north east elevation drawing and drawing of visibility splays Approve, subject to safeguarding conditions below:

Conditions

1. SC1 Full planning permission, time limit (3 years)
2. SC5 Landscape scheme
3. SC6 Landscape implementation
4. SC8 Tree protection
5. SC14 Foundation details for the first floor gym extension (Reason: To ensure against damage to roots of protected trees)
6. SC54 Bird nest boxes (wording to include 'Bat and bird nest boxes')
7. SC13 Materials
8. SC58 Lighting
9. SC15 Vehicle parking (worded: '...the buildings....parking and turning...')
10. SC16 Cycle parking (worded: '...the building..')
11. SC18 Travel Plan
12. SC20 Vehicle visibility splays (worded: '...2.4m...70.0m...')
13. SC38 Noise during construction

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Regional Spatial Strategy – East of England Plan (adopted May 2008)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (adopted January 2007)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies (adopted July 2007)
- Planning File Refs: S/1945/08/F, S/0215/94/F S/1934/93/LB and S/1670/93/F and S/0993/80/F
- South Cambridgeshire Physical Activity Strategy 2004 – 2007
- South Cambridgeshire District Council's 'Interim Dual Use Sports facility Strategy' (July 1999)

Contact Officer: Mrs Melissa Reynolds – Team Leader (East Area)
Telephone: (01954) 713237