



Martin Perks
Planning Officer
Cotswold District Council

By email

08.11.2021

Dear Martin,

Further to my email of 27 October, we would like to respond to GCC's communications of 03 November.

On 7th July the Planning Committee deferred the decision on application 20/04147/FUL "to seek additional information regarding community engagement, climate change considerations and potential alternative uses".

Subsequently, Fairford Town Council has had discussions with GCC and received further information which have provided greater assurance that ancillary community facilities could be developed on the adjacent playing field to ensure the longer-term viability for the Town Council of taking on responsibility for this. These facilities would include a clubhouse including changing rooms, a function room and gym facility, to be managed and supported jointly by the Town Council and the tenant sports clubs. The majority of the funding for the capital development (in the order of £1.5 million) is expected to come from lottery/major sporting bodies (as and when available), supplemented by other fund-raising.

Our chief concern about GCC's communication of 21 October was that it did not reflect the current position in our discussions with them or take account of our request (dated 8 October) for assurances on certain key matters relating to the feasibility of the proposed clubhouse/community building development at the southern end of the former CHS playing field, clarified further in our email of 26 October.

GCC have now responded to this with pre-application advice concerning the requirements to make a new entrance onto Horcott Road at the southern end of the playing field acceptable, which we are taking as confirming the feasibility of this.

They have also attached a copy of the recent advice from Rachel Foster in the County Archaeology department, which was to "to ensure where possible belowground impacts should be reduced which also applies to any proposed landscaping such as tree planting and drainage and that there would be no future plans for upgrade of the pitches which would have a belowground impact", which suggests there is no overwhelming reason why a development of the type proposed should not be acceptable, subject to appropriate archaeological investigation and/or mitigation.

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GCC has also confirmed in a separate email (dated 27 October) that “GCC supports the aspirations of the Town Council to develop ancillary facilities to support the future use of the playing fields should they agree to take responsibility for them”.

This would appear to meet the Town Council’s request for additional assurances relating to the feasibility of the potential community/clubhouse building development at the southern end the former CHS playing field.

In terms of consistency with planning policies, we consider that from our point of view this now meets the requirement/proviso in clause 2 of Local Plan policy INF2 that “replacement facilities are provided in an appropriate alternative location having regard to Clause 1 [of the same policy]” – the latter including requirements to demonstrate that “the proposal [the community taking on responsibility for the playing field] is economically viable in terms of its ongoing maintenance” – and this in turn provides sufficient evidence of the public benefit to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of the conservation area and listed buildings due to the proposed new housing development (ref. CDLP policy EN10 and NPPF paragraph 202) and thereby overcome our objections.

As stated previously, taking on the former CHS playing fields would involve significant responsibilities (and potentially costs) for the Town Council. Ensuring the viability of this for the longer term involves meeting the needs and aspirations of the existing tenants, principally Fairford RFC, who would also be responsible in large part for its maintenance. This would include having clubhouse facilities on the site. Without this, these tenancies and support cannot realistically be ensured for the longer term, and we could easily find we have a large liability rather than an asset.

The timing of the clubhouse/community building development would be dependent on raising the necessary funds (likely to be substantially from lottery/major sporting body sources), but it is the support of GCC, the principle of development and the potential for this (obviously subject to the relevant planning consents) that is of prime importance at this stage.

It would seem right to provide for an appropriate commuted sum (as suggested by GCC) to support the proposed facility by a section 106 agreement or unilateral undertaking tied to this planning consent.

I hope this clarifies our position for the benefit of the Planning and Licensing Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Richard Harrison
Chair, Fairford Town Council Planning Committee.

c.c.
CDC Democratic Services
GCC (Andy Carr)
District Cllrs S. Andrews and S. Trotter
County Cllr D. Morris

Encl.