
SUMMARY REPORT

Application Ref:	20221293
Site Address:	Cascades Leisure Centre, Thong Lane, Gravesend
Application Description:	Demolition of the existing Cascades Leisure Centre and public house and redevelopment of the site to provide a new leisure centre with community pool, leisure water, cafe, soft play, 'clip n climb' facility, a six court sports hall, fitness suite, spin studio, 2 no. fitness studios, 2 no. squash courts, a new tennis/netball court, improvements to the existing play area, landscaping across the site and associated car parking.
Applicant:	Gravesham Borough Council
Agent:	Lichfields
Ward:	Riverview
Parish:	Non-Parish Area
Decision due date:	3 March 2023
Decision Level:	Planning Committee – Wednesday 1 March 2023
Reason for referral:	An application made on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council Delegated to Service Manager (Planning) to grant Permission in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee
Recommendation:	subject to the applicant agreeing pre-commencement conditions and finalisation of planning conditions

Summary of Reasons for Recommendations

The proposal is for the demolition and rebuild of Cascades Leisure Centre. It will involve the demolition of the main building and Regan's Bar and its replacement with a new leisure centre, outdoor play area, netball courts, trim trail and kick about area.

The principle of development is acceptable and the replacement building and associated development will have no detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposals will have no detrimental impact on the surrounding landscape, character of the area, amenity, highway safety or parking. The scheme takes into account the history of the site and incorporates this in its design and play area.

All representations received from both 3rd parties and consultees and have been taken into account when considering this proposal and the development is considered to comply with local and national planning policy.

The recommendation is delegated to Service Manager (Planning) to grant Permission in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee subject to the applicant agreeing pre-commencement conditions and finalisation of planning conditions

MAIN REPORT

1. Introduction

It was considered that a Members pre meeting site inspection would be beneficial to Members to help understand the proposal and the context of the wider site.

2. Site Inspection

A Members Site inspection was held on Saturday 25th February 2023 at 10.00am.

Present

Cllr Brian Sangha
Cllr Derek Ashenden
Cllr Emma Morley
Cllr Bob Lane
Cllr Tony Rice
Cllr Brian Francis

Also Present

Richard Hart (Team Leader, Development Management)
Alison Webster (Senior Planner, Development Management)

Apologies

Cllr Harold Craske
Cllr Aaron Elliott
Cllr Gary Harding
Cllr Samir Jassal
Cllr Elizabeth Mulheran

Cllr Brian Sangha as the Chair of the Planning introduced the officers and invited the Senior Planning Officer, Ms Alison Webster to outline details of the application. The Chair also reminded Members that they could ask questions for clarification but not give opinions on the proposal.

The Senior Planning Officer advised that the application is for demolition of the existing Cascades Leisure Centre and public house known as Regan's Bar and redevelopment of the site to provide a new leisure centre with community pool and other associated facilities.

The Team Leader, Mr Richard Hart handed out a copy of the existing and proposed site plan to Members present.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the development would involve building on the existing car park to the south of Cascades leisure centre. The existing leisure centre would remain operational during the construction of the new centre and a planning condition is recommended that within 6 months of the new centre being opened, demolition on the existing centre would commence. The Senior Planning Officer explained that the car parking for the new centre would be on the location of the existing Cascades building. Turning to design the Senior Planning Officer outlined that the architect's design approach was to use a combination of the historic use of the site as an airfield along with the wider agricultural buildings found in the landscape.

With regards to the Green Belt, the Senior Planning Officer explained that the site is within Green

Belt and the proposed outdoor recreation facilities is appropriate development in the Green Belt and the replacement building meets the exceptions test within the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). Beyond the site it was explained that the AONB lies to the southeast, and to the east is the designated landscape character area of Higham Arable Farmlands. For the avoidance of doubt the site is not within a designated landscape area.

The Senior Planning Officer explained that the existing Public House (Regan's Bar) and associated residential unit would be demolished and would not be replaced.

For clarification Cllr Morley asked about the location of the proposed building. It was explained that the location of the existing car park is the location of the proposed replacement building. Cllr Lane stated it would be helpful to walk the perimeter of the existing car park to understand the location of the proposed building and how it relates to the surrounding area.

The Senior Planning Officer produced a site plan of the existing site layout which showed the footprint of existing building highlighted on it. Members and accompanying officers walked to the eastern end of the car park. Cllr Lane asked if the green triangular space would be retained, it was confirmed by Officers that it would be retained.

The group then walked to the southern edge of the existing car park and a number of Cllrs sought clarification regarding the position of the proposed building and if the existing trees on the raised bank would be retained. It was clarified to Members that the trees on the bank would be retained and appropriate conditions would be included to protect the trees during the construction phase.

Cllr Ashenden asked for clarification on how the parking would operate during the construction phase and he noted that the car park is regularly near capacity on weekends and he also asked how the bus services would operate during the construction phase. Cllr Ashenden raised concern regarding how the site would be secured and queried the impact upon the existing bus stop during construction.

It was confirmed by Officers that a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) condition is included and that this would in part seek to minimise the impact of construction on parking, public transport and local highways. Cllr Francis noted the distance of the nearest properties on Thong Lane and Officers confirmed that there is sufficient distance to the new development to not adversely impact on the amenity of the existing properties and their respective occupiers.

Cllr Sangha informed the group it would be helpful to walk around the outside of the existing building to understand the existing site context. The group moved to the front of the site and noted the existing overflow car park at the northern end of the site. The Senior Planning Policy Officer confirmed that this is outside of the redline plan and does not form part of this application.

Various Cllrs wanted to understand from the applicant/landowner if the overflow car parking area that is currently closed will be made available during the construction phase to offset the closed parking area. Officers confirmed to Members that this area is outside of the redline boundary, but that they would seek clarification from the planning agent.

The Senior Planning Officer directed the group to the rear of the existing building where Cllr Lane and Cllr Rice noted that the rear of the building and surrounding area was in a relative clean condition.

Various Cllrs made comments about the amount of hardstanding and retaining walls around the rear of the existing building. The group then walked around the building and returned to the front of the building.

Cllr Sangha thanked the Committee Members for their attendance and closed the meeting.

3. Service Manager (Planning) Additional Comments

The following questions/points were raised during the meeting:

Overflow Car Park

The planning agent has confirmed that the existing overflow car park to the north of the site is in the ownership of the applicant, Gravesham Borough Council. This overflow car park is available to the operators of Cascades for when the main car park is at capacity. In order to avoid anti-social behaviour, the overflow car park is kept closed when it is not required. If during the construction phase additional on-site car parking is needed at Cascades, the overflow car park (which can accommodate 150+ cars) will be made available under existing agreements by the operators of Cascades for users of the leisure centre.

The relationship between the proposed development and the overflow car park is shown on Drawing No. 2333-COL-XX -X X-DR-L-1000 (Landscape General Arrangement Plan). The applicant has confirmed that the omission of the Overflow Car Park from this application is due to no changes being proposed to the Overflow Car Park.

Public House - (Regan's Bar)

The Public House is not a registered asset of Community Value and as such this is not a material consideration for this application.

Bus Stop Relocation

The relocation of the bus stop within the site during construction and after completion, has yet to be agreed upon. As such the matter is dealt with via conditions. Indicatively the applicant is proposing to relocate the bus stop opposite to the existing children's play area. This would provide safer access to the existing leisure centre during construction as well as a safe accessible route to the new leisure centre.

Parking During Construction

Parking during the construction period will be addressed through the pre-commencement condition 3 (CEMP). Indicative plans provided by the applicant show a temporary car park being provided at what will be the Overflow Parking Area, in the completed development. A number of underutilised spaces exist to the north and east of the existing leisure centre, which could be utilised for temporary parking during the construction of the new leisure centre. These locations are accessible via the existing access used for Gravesend Golf Centre. In addition to this temporary parking provision, the existing overspill car park (which can accommodate 150+ cars) will be available for users of the leisure centre, in instances where the parking provision is oversubscribed.

Safety and security of the site during construction

During the construction of the development site security and safety will be addressed through the pre-commencement condition 3 (CEMP) specifically the following elements of condition 3

- (e) Details of security fencing and other site security measures
- (m) Details of temporary construction or security lighting

As part of the CEMP traffic marshals/banksmen will be present at the site, to ensure construction related traffic operates safely and does not conflict with movements of members of the public. This

will include restricting construction vehicle movements should any members of the public be in close proximity to construction vehicles on site. In addition, ongoing engagement will take place between the developer and operator of the leisure centre to ensure deliveries are restricted to periods outside of the leisure centre's peak periods of occupancy.

The contractor is required via other regulatory regimes to comply with relevant Health and Safety Executive legislation.

Access to the Construction Compound

Access to the Construction compound has not been finalised and whilst the applicant has submitted a draft CEMP the pre-commencement condition (3) requires a number of details including:

(d) Details of the location of the proposed construction compound

The above details will need to take into account of any land level differences and any other site-specific constraints.

Length of Build

The length of the build is not a material consideration. From the date of approval, the applicant would have 3 years to implement the approved scheme subject to all relevant pre-commencement conditions being discharged. However, it should be noted that the planning application material identifies an indicative commencement date of June 2023, with a completion date of December 2024 for the new leisure centre, with the demolition of the existing centre and remaining works to follow.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is not yet a mandatory requirement and comes into force in November 2023. The report addresses biodiversity in 'Ecology and Biodiversity' section of the main report. For the avoidance of doubt the following condition is included to ensure any loss of biodiversity from the development is offset.

15. Prior to the commencement of any above ground works details of how the development will offset biodiversity loss/enhance biodiversity will be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This will include a native species-only landscape plan and retention of felled trees on-site. The approved details will be implemented and thereafter retained.

Recommendation

Delegated to Service Manager (Planning) to grant Permission in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee subject to the applicant agreeing pre-commencement conditions and finalisation of planning conditions