

**Item 4**                      **11/00100/FUL**

**Case Officer**            **Caron Taylor**

**Ward**                        **Chisnall**

**Proposal**                 **Proposed extension of existing changing rooms to include gymnasium**

**Location**                **Chisnall Playing Fields Chisnall Lane Coppull**

**Applicant**                **Ainscough Strategic Land Ltd**

**Consultation expiry: 15 March 2011**

**Application expiry: 5 April 2011**

### **Proposal**

1. The application is for a proposed extension to the existing changing rooms to include a gymnasium.

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that this application is refused planning permission.

### **Chairs Brief**

3. The application is being brought to Chair's Briefing due to the level of support for the application, but also that a letter of objection has been received from the nearest property.

**Consultation expiry date: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

**Decision date: 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

4. The site is situated on Chisnall Lane, Coppull behind Coppull Moor Farm in the Green Belt. The site has three full sized rugby pitches, one ¾ sized pitch and one mini pitch. The proposal is to extend the existing changing rooms. There is an existing pavilion on the site which will remain.
5. The proposed extension will add a further 39m in length to the existing building, going from 11.5m long currently to 50.5m as proposed. The width will remain the same.

### **Main Issues**

6. The main issues for consideration in respect of this planning application are:

- Principle of the development
- Impact on the neighbours
- Design
- Traffic and Transport

### **Representations**

7. 28 letters of support have been received from 24 households. Their reasons for support can be summarised as:

- The proposal will benefit the local area;
- It will enable them to keep fit as existing gym's are too expensive and only allow under 16's in at limited times. All Seasons is not conducive to group instruction or younger age groups;
- To proposal is essential for them to improve as a senior rugby club;
- It is the only club of it's kind in the area and the facilities would support children in a safe and modern environment;
- A lot of training has to be cancelled due to bad weather which affects fitness. It will enable them to train all year round;
- The facilities will be free for all members and allow them to train as a family;

- Overcoming health inequalities and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access good sport, physical activity and recreation facilities is a key objective of the draft Core Strategy;
  - The gym would allow players to exercise as a team simultaneously increasing training times;
  - There are very few facilities of this type in the area;
  - The existing changing rooms let the club down and are not fit for purpose;
  - Neighbouring clubs have much better facilities and they lose older player to them;
  - It will be an incentive for friends and family to increase their fitness;
  - The buildings will be viewed in the context of vast barn at Staveley's;
  - A gym is an essential part of the training facilities;
  - There is little for young people to do in the area;
  - The gymnasium room will also be used for teaching and will enable youngsters to learn about the technical aspects of the game as well as play, which they currently have to do outside in all weathers;
  - It is a great facility and deserves the support of the Council;
  - The current changing rooms are no big enough for the number of teams – on Sunday's there can be 4-8 teams at home. There are also an increasing number of female players.
8. One letter of objection has been received from the nearest property. They agree that the existing changing facilities are inadequate for the size and number of the playing fields, however the inclusion of a gymnasium is in their opinion not necessary. This causes the scale of the proposed development to be excessive, at approximately 40% of the original building.
9. Coppull Parish Council has no objections to the proposal.

### **Consultations**

10. None received

### **Applicants Case**

11. The club state that its membership has been rising steadily over the past five years and it envisages doubling its current members in the next five years through attracting more children and targeting older members by offering additional forms of rugby. There is also a walking club which will be expanded to include 'active classes'.
12. With the current membership levels an average match day will have five teams playing at home, which with opponents results in ten teams (some of mixed sex) requiring changing facilities, plus one match official per game. At present the lack of changing facilities often mean young children have to get changed in the car park and there are up to five officials sharing a changing space 2 metres square. The proposed extension will increase the changing facilities to eight larger rooms plus an official's room which will double as a treatment room.
13. The proposed gymnasium will be used for rehabilitation, conditioning and cold weather training, as well as educational classes that are hosted by the club that require an indoor facility such as first aid courses and coaching education. However, it will also be a multi-use room open to the community as it will provide floor space for many other activities including keep fit for older members, dance and all other related activity that is currently offered at non-affordable prices elsewhere.
14. Members can't use other existing facilities around the Chorley area for a number of reasons; many are not affordable to the 16-34 age group and under 16's are not allowed in private gym's and only have limited use of All Seasons Leisure Centre as they are not allowed in after 5.30pm. It is essential that members have use of a gym to enable them to participate in the sport. At present it is clear that some members are disadvantaged when they take to the field against other teams who are better prepared. There are over 300 playing members and their families who support the proposal for a gymnasium which will put the people of Chorley on a level playing field against other areas.
15. There are undoubted benefits to the scheme and perhaps in light of the new localism bill they ask that the Members consider which will benefit the community more – the facilities or not allowing that area of Green Belt to be built on.

## Assessment

### Principle of the development

16. The site is in the Green Belt covered by national Planning Policy Guidance note 2: Green Belts (PPG2) and Local Plan Policy DC1. This states that essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation are appropriate development in the Green Belt.
17. PPG2 goes on to say essential facilities should be genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. Possible examples of such facilities include small changing rooms or unobtrusive spectator accommodation for outdoor sport, or small stables for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation.
18. PPG17 – Planning for Outdoor Sport and Recreation is also relevant to this proposal. This states that planning permission should be granted in Green Belts for proposals to establish or to modernise essential facilities [this author's emphasis] for outdoor sport and recreation where the openness of the Green Belt is maintained. Development should be the minimum necessary and non-essential facilities (e.g. additional function rooms or indoor leisure) should be treated as inappropriate development. Very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt will need to be demonstrated if such inappropriate development is to be permitted.
19. There are two aspects to the proposal, the changing rooms along with official's room/treatment room and the gymnasium. It is considered that the changing rooms are acceptable in principle being considered essential to enable rugby to be playing on the existing pitches. The current changing room building on the site is 11.5m by 6.8m (with a ridge of 4.8m). This houses four changing rooms of 9.6m<sup>2</sup> each with a W.C. and shower and a small official's room which doubles as a treatment room. The extension will allow the existing four changing rooms to be knocked together to create two larger rooms and six new changing rooms will be built along with an officials/treatment room. It is considered that the eight changing rooms and officials room/teaching room are essential to the rugby club due to the number of teams that play on an average match day, of varying ages, some of mixed sex plus match officials of both sexes. This aspect of the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Green Belt policy.
20. The proposed gymnasium is more problematic in Green Belt policy terms. There is no doubt that the gymnasium/multi-purpose room would be a desirable facility for the rugby club to have in terms of training, particularly in poor weather and for younger members and other members of the community, however it is considered desirable rather than essential to allow rugby to be played on the site. The gymnasium element is therefore considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
21. PPG2 is clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
22. The circumstances put forward by the club include that it will be used for team training, particularly in poor weather and for younger members who cannot attend or have limited access to existing gymnasiums. In addition it would be a multi-use room for tactical talks and associated education courses such as first aid. It would also be open to the wider community for non-rugby related uses, such as dance. It would encourage young people to become fitter and healthier and would also attract friends and family who do not currently take part in sport to lead a healthier lifestyle at a time this is something the Government are trying to encourage.
23. However, the rugby club currently has a pavilion on the site as well as the current changing room building. While it has been accepted that the facilities are a desirable addition to those already on the site PPG2 advises that in view of the presumption against inappropriate development the Secretary of State will attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt when considering any planning application or appeal concerning such development. Therefore although the special circumstances put forward by the applicant are noted, it is not considered that they carry such substantial weight that they outweigh Green Belt policy, the aim of which is to protect the openness of the Green Belt i.e. leave it free from development. The proposals are

therefore considered contrary to PPG2 and PPG17.

#### Impact on the neighbours

24. The nearest property to the proposed extension is known as Copper Beech and is situated to the east of the playing fields. They have objected to the application on the grounds that they consider the gymnasium element is not necessary, although they agree the existing changing facilities are inadequate. There will be approximately 30m between the extension and the boundary with this property, however the existing changing rooms as existing are nearer than the extension. To the west the nearest property is Patrick Farm but this will be approximately 200m from the proposal separated by the rugby pitches. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposal will have an unacceptable impact on any neighbouring properties.

#### Siting and Design

25. The proposal will increase the existing changing rooms by 39m in length, the width will remain the same. The design of the extension reflects the existing building, with a single ridge running down its length and no windows for security purposes. It will be at a slightly lower level giving a split-level design as the land falls away to the west. It will have a small gable feature where the existing and proposed parts of the changing rooms meet. The extension will be sited so it is adjacent the southern field boundary as per the existing changing rooms. The existing landscaping on this boundary will provide screening to the proposal and it is considered appropriate siting. The extension design is functional and replicates that of the existing building. The design is considered acceptable in accordance with Policy GN5.

#### Traffic and Transport

26. The site has a large area of parking, which the extension will not reduce and the access to the site will remain the same. It is not considered the proposal will increase the number of visitors to the site on match days, and although it may lead to an increase in traffic at other times if other classes are held in the multi-use room the existing parking and access are considered sufficient for this. Therefore the proposal is considered acceptable in this respect in accordance with Policy TR4.

#### Other

27. The proposed plans show a new wall and gates to be erected at the entrance to the site to replace the existing. It is not considered this requires planning permission as it is set back from Chisnall Lane.

#### **Overall Conclusion**

28. The application is finely balanced. There are two parts to the proposed facilities; the changing and treatments rooms and the gymnasium/multi-purpose room. The changing/treatment rooms are considered appropriate development and in accordance with policy, however it considered that the gymnasium/multi-purpose room is inappropriate development in the Green Belt in that it is a desirable rather than essential facility. The special circumstances that have been put forward by the applicant have been considered but on balance it is not considered these outweigh the significant weight that is applied to Green Belt policy in preventing inappropriate development.

#### **Planning Policies**

##### National Planning Policies:

PPG2, PPG17

##### Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review

Policies: DC1, GN5, TR4

#### **Planning History**

**00/00783/FUL** Siting of metal storage container (retrospective application) Permitted. 21 November 2000

**02/00228/FUL** Siting of metal container for storage. Permitted. 30 April 2002

**03/00882/FUL** Erection of clubhouse and extension of carpark. Permitted. 9 October 2003

**10/00835/FUL** Erection of 4 no. x 15m floodlights and sports pitch drainage. Permitted. 24 November 2010

**Recommendation: Refuse Full Planning Permission**

**Reasons**

1. The proposed development would be located within the Green Belt. The gymnasium/multi-use room part of the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance note 2 and reiterated by Chorley Borough Local Plan Review Policy DC1. The applicant has put forward a case for very special circumstances, however it is not considered that the case put forward by the applicant outweighs the total harm in terms of inappropriateness (any other harm) to the Green Belt to justify permitting the proposal.