

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>14 February 2011</b>
By	<b>Head of Planning</b>
Local Authority	<b>Adur District Council</b>
Application Number	<b>ADC/0496/10</b>
Application	<b>Demolition of existing sports and pool buildings and erection of new sports building to include an indoor multi-purpose sports hall and a 6 lane indoor swimming pool, including additional landscaping and mitigation works and alterations to parking layout</b>
Address	<b>Sports Hall and Swimming Pool, Lancing College, College Drive, Lancing, West Sussex</b>
Purpose of Report	<b>This report relates to a proposal to erect a new sports hall/swimming pool building on the site of an existing sports hall and swimming pool adjacent to Lancing College Chapel and to seek. The purpose of this report is to gain members' agreement to comments to be submitted to Adur District Council on the application.</b>

---

**Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to submit the following comments to Adur District Council:**

- **The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) accepts that the existing sports hall and, to a lesser extent, the swimming pool building, detract from the setting of the grade I listed Chapel, which is set in a prominent position above the Adur valley**
- **The SDNPA considers the proposed replacement building to be a suitable solution that meets the internal requirements for a sports hall and swimming pool, whilst minimising the bulk and massing and using natural external materials and a curving sedum roof to help blend into the Downland setting**
- **The SDNPA is concerned that a renewable/sustainable heat source has not been incorporated into the proposals, but notes that the proposed building would be constructed to a higher standard of energy efficiency than the existing buildings. The SDNPA would welcome future discussions regarding the inclusion of renewable/sustainable energy provision for the College when the Management Plan for the College is next reviewed**
- **Accordingly, the SDNPA raises no objection to the proposals, subject to a condition requiring a long term landscaping plan, a maintenance agreement relating to the sedum roof, and controls on the use of external lighting. The SDNPA would also wish to see that any measures recommended by the District Council's specialist bat advisor(s) are included.**

---

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Lancing College sits in a very prominent position on the Downs above the Adur valley. The school consists of a collection of Victorian Gothic buildings laid out in a monastic style around two quads (both of which are individually listed Grade II\*), along with the "Great School" building (also listed Grade II\*) and the French Gothic style College Chapel (a "beacon of education and religion" which is listed Grade I). There are some other buildings

in the school that are listed Grade II and more modern buildings including the existing sports hall (dating from 1975) and swimming pool building (dating from 1981).

## **2. The proposals**

- 2.1 The proposal is to demolish the existing sports hall and swimming pool building and to replace them with a single building housing the sports and swimming facilities. The existing buildings date from 1975 and 1981 respectively and the sports hall no longer meets Sport England's standards. It is approaching the end of its useful life unless it were to undergo a major refurbishment. The swimming pool, although slightly newer, is also in need of some extent of refurbishment.
- 2.2 The proposed design, the design of which has been through a series of evolutions over a number of years, is for a structure that is partly dug into the ground, topped by a curving sedum roof with low eaves over timber-clad walls.
- 2.3 The aim is to create a "centre of excellence" for sports education and coaching.

## **3. Assessment**

- 3.1 The proposal site is in a very prominent location within the South Downs National Park. National Parks have two statutory purposes which must be taken into account when considering planning proposals that could have an impact upon the National Park:

1. *'To conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage'.*
2. *'To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities.'*

If there is a conflict between these two policies, then the first must take precedence. National Park Authorities also have a duty in pursuing those purposes:

*'To seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park'.*

- 3.2 The proposal site is also immediately adjacent to a grade I listed building. Grade I buildings are considered to be of exceptional interest and comprise only 2.5% of all statutorily listed buildings. Planning Policy Statement 5 includes the need to assess the importance of the setting of heritage features when considering development proposals. The District Council has not yet received consultation responses from English Heritage or the County Architect – if these are received before the date of the SDNPA Planning Committee they will be reported.
- 3.3 Given the grade I status of the Chapel, its prominence in its setting in the landscape, and length of time that it has been an important landmark, it is very important that a large new building adjacent to the site is sensitively designed. The existing portal-framed and metal-clad sports hall is prominent in views towards the school and Chapel – particularly in views from Mill Hill. There will be a significant benefit in the removal of the sports hall and (to a lesser extent) the swimming pool due to their visual prominence. One must be careful not to accept a poor design on the basis that anything is better than the existing building, and some of the indicative drawings made at a much earlier stage of the design evolution would have been likely to have raised concerns.
- 3.4 By their nature sports halls must be of a large scale to meet the internal requirements, but the proposed design helps limit the impact. The proposed building has a slightly larger footprint than the existing sports hall and swimming pool, but would have reduced height, bulk and massing, which is helped by its position in the landform. The sedum roof with overhanging eaves and use of non-reflective materials will help provide a less prominent building and the final evolution of the design as submitted could be considered to be an enhancement of the site and the setting of the Chapel. However, if permission is granted, this should be subject to a maintenance agreement relating to the sedum roof.
- 3.5 Consideration was given to the possibility of replacing only sports hall, or siting it in a different location, but the re-use of the existing site was considered preferable and had the added benefit of removal of existing buildings, which might otherwise have been retained (at

one time conversion of the old sports hall to a theatre was considered). Given the number of listed buildings on the site, any location would have been likely to have raised issues of setting, although this is a particularly sensitive part of the site.

- 3.6 It is a concern that a sustainably fuelled heating system could not be incorporated into the proposals as sports halls and swimming pools traditionally use a large amount of energy. However, energy saving measures have been incorporated into the design and the thick roof structure to support the sedum will provide more insulation than a traditional roof.
- 3.7 Many of the existing trees on the northern boundary would be retained, but a group of four lime, poplar and sycamore would be lost due to changes in levels. New indigenous tree and shrub planting would be carried out along the edge of the adjacent field to provide additional screening, replace trees lost and allow longer term replacement of the poplars around the car park. There would also be longer term planting following the removal of the poplars in 10-15 years. To the west, trees including two mature willows, crab apples and a cherry would be lost, but would be replaced by a beech hedge that would continue around the southern side of the proposed building. Given the long-term nature of some of the planting proposals it may be appropriate to seek a landscape management plan if permission is to be granted.
- 3.8 There is a bat maternity roost present within part of the existing swimming pool building. The proposals include protection of the bats during demolition and mitigation measures in the form of various openings between the oak cladding and main hall structure but consultation with a bat expert will be necessary to ensure that no other mitigation/provision is necessary.
- 3.9 The existing buildings have externally mounted floodlights which would be replaced by directional lighting. This is likely to be less intrusive with less spillage than the existing floodlights, although it may nevertheless be appropriate to seek a condition ensuring that the type of external lighting is controlled.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The proposals could be considered to result in an enhancement of the site, including the setting of the grade I listed Chapel. The proposed long term landscaping would need to be ensured via a condition and the sedum roof would need to be the subject of a maintenance plan to ensure that the roof of the building does not become a prominent eyesore if the planting were to die off. The presence of bats would also suggest the need for a condition in line with any conclusion of the District Council's bat advisers. The external lighting proposed for the site should also be subject to controls to ensure that light spillage is controlled in this prominent and sensitive site.

#### **5. Resources**

- 5.1 There are potential implications for staff resources should the application go to appeal.

#### **6. Risk management**

- 6.1 The risks of costs being awarded against the National Park Authority at appeal are low, providing the National Park Authority does not act unreasonably. The recommendation that is presented the Committee is considered by your officers to be reasonable.

#### **7. Human Rights, Equalities, Health and Safety**

- 7.1 As the National Park Authority is not the determining authority there are no implications for the Authority arising out of the application.

#### **8. External Consultees**

- 8.1 None

JIM REDWOOD  
Interim Head of Planning

Contact Officer:	Nat Belderson
Tel:	01243 558709
email:	<a href="mailto:Nat.belderson@southdowns.gov.uk">Nat.belderson@southdowns.gov.uk</a>
Appendices	
SDNPA Consultees	Interim Senior Solicitor.