

<b>Agenda Item</b> A5	<b>Committee Date</b> 29 April 2019	<b>Application Number</b> 19/00163/FUL
<b>Application Site</b>  Lancaster University Sports Centre Bigforth Drive Bailrigg Lancaster		<b>Proposal</b>  Erection of a front and side extension to existing sports centre and alteration to land levels
<b>Name of Applicant</b>  Mr David Griffiths		<b>Name of Agent</b>  Mr Tim Casselden
<b>Decision Target Date</b>  31 May 2019		<b>Reason For Delay</b>  None
<b>Case Officer</b>		Mr Andrew Clement
<b>Departure</b>		None
<b>Summary of Recommendation</b>		Approval

## **1.0 The Site and its Surroundings**

- 1.1 Lancaster University lies approximately 3 miles south of Lancaster City Centre between Bailrigg and Galgate on moderately raised land between the A6 Scotforth Road and the M6 Motorway. The site that forms the subject of this application is the Lancaster University Sports Centre, located to the east of the main access to the University campus, between the rugby fields to the west and Lake Carter to the east. The new Sports Centre was constructed through permission 08/00246/FUL on a site formerly occupied by the playing field pavilion, a fisheries building and a car park, and has recently been extended through permission 18/00803/VCN. The Sports Centre is surrounded by mature woodlands to the north and east, with more recent planting to the south, whilst the west is more open with playing fields, namely rugby pitches. The site occupies a prominent position at the entrance to the Campus off the A6 Scotforth Road. The application site is within an open space allocation for outdoor sports facilities as part of a designated Urban Green Space and Key Urban Landscape.

## **2.0 The Proposal**

- 2.1 The application seeks consent to erect a front and side extension to the existing Sports Centre to provide a new sports hall, with associated plant, storage area, external access and landscaping. The proposed development has a footprint of 1,810sq.m, which represents an approximately 40% increase to existing building footprint. The sports hall is to measure a maximum of 15.95 metre tall, with the sports hall measuring 37.8 metre long and 43.7 metres wide, in addition to a subservient link extension development between the proposed sports hall and existing sports centre, measuring 10 metres wide by 15.7 metres deep with a parapet roof up to 5.6 metres tall. This development would create a significant extension to the existing Sport Centre, to be finished predominately in black and off-black cladding, with smaller elements of anthracite colour cladding and pewter splitfaced concrete facing blockwork. The large elevations of cladding to the proposed sports hall is to be broken horizontally by a band of LED strip lighting around the front and side elevations approximately halfway up the proposed extension.
- 2.2 To facilitate the proposed development, 100 trees are to be removed from the north of the existing Sports Centre building to accommodate the footprint of the sports hall. Significant alterations to

levels are required to develop on the currently sloping site and accommodate the widening of the existing private access road to provide a layby for a fire vehicle. Also within the development area are external stairwells, bicycle storage facilities and a surface water drainage cellular storage tank to control discharge rates to a drainage pipe.

### **3.0 Site History**

- 3.1 Notwithstanding the many applications that relate to the wider University Campus as a whole, the most relevant planning history in relation to this application is listed below.

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
08/00246/FUL	Erection of new sports centre comprising 25m swimming pool, 8 court sports hall, health and fitness facilities, squash courts and climbing wall	Permitted
12/00253/FUL	Creation of an overflow car park for sports centre development with associated landscaping	Permitted
18/00803/VCN	Erection of a projecting first floor extension to existing sports centre with plant room at roof level (pursuant to the variation of conditions and 3, 4 and 6 on planning permission 18/00102/FUL to vary the approved plans)	Permitted
18/01352/PRETWO & 18/01538/PREMTG	- Erection of an extension to existing Sports Centre to provide a new sports hall with plant and storage area, and associated access and landscaping	Advice Provided

### **4.0 Consultation Responses**

- 4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and non-statutory consultees (though the re-consultation following the submission of amended details expires on 23 April):

Consultee	Response
<b>Environmental Health</b>	No observation received to date.
<b>Natural England</b>	No observation received to date.
<b>County Highways</b>	<b>No objection</b> to original proposal subject to implementation of mitigation measures within the submitted Travel Assessment.
<b>Tree Officer</b>	<b>Objection.</b> The location and volume of trees proposed to be felled has significant potential to adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the site and that of the wider public domain.
<b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b>	<b>No objection</b> in principle. However, the LLFA requires further details to ensure the proposed drainage strategy is sufficient for the development.
<b>Sport England</b>	<b>No objection</b> to original proposal.

### **5.0 Neighbour Representations**

- 5.1 No observation received to date. Any comments received prior to planning committee will be verbally reported.

### **6.0 Principal National and Development Plan Policies**

- 6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018

The National Planning Policy Framework indicates that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to the determination of this proposal:

Paragraphs 8 and 11 – Sustainable Development  
 Section 8 – Promoting healthy communities  
 Section 12 – Requiring Good Design

Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change  
Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment  
Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

## 6.2 Development Management DPD

DM12: Leisure Facilities & Attractions  
DM20: Enhancing Accessibility and Transport Linkages  
DM21: Walking & Cycling  
DM22: Vehicle Parking Provision  
DM26: Open Space, Sports & Recreation Facilities  
DM27: Protection & Enhancement of Biodiversity  
DM29: Protection of Trees, Hedgerows & Woodland  
DM33: Development affecting Non-Designated Heritage Assets or their Settings  
DM35: Key Design Principles  
DM37: Air Quality Management and Pollution  
DM38: Development & Flood Risk  
DM39: Surface Water Run-Off & Sustainable Drainage  
DM48: Community Infrastructure  
DM49: Local Services  
Appendix B: Car Parking Standards

## 6.3 Lancaster District Core Strategy Saved Policies (adopted July 2008)

ER1 – Higher and Further Education  
SC5 – Achieving Quality in Design  
SC8 – Recreation and Open Space

## 6.4 Lancaster District Local Plan Saved Policies (adopted 2004)

E29 – Urban Greenspaces  
E31 – Key Urban Landscapes  
R1 – Outdoor Playing Space  
R12 – Lancaster University

## 6.5 Local Planning Policy Overview – Current Position

On 15 May 2018, and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), Lancaster City Council submitted the following documents to the Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate) for examination:

- (i) The Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD; and,
- (ii) (A Review of) The Development Management DPD

The Examination Hearing Sessions commenced on 9 April 2019

The **Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD** will replace the remaining policies of the Lancaster District Core Strategy (2008) and the residual ‘saved’ land allocation policies from the 2004 District Local Plan.

The **Review of the Development Management DPD** updates the policies that are contained within the current document, which was adopted in December 2014. As it is part of the development plan the current document is already material in terms of decision-making.

Given the current stage of both DPDs, it is considered that significant weight can be attributed to the policies contained therein where no significant objection to them has been raised.

## 7.0 Comment and Analysis

### 7.1 The proposal raises the following key considerations:

- Principle of the development and employment opportunities;

- Design, scale and landscape impact upon the setting of non-designated heritage assets;
- Impact on trees and ecology;
- Sports pitch provision;
- Highways and parking; and
- Drainage, flooding and air quality.

## 7.2 Principle of the development and employment opportunities

7.2.1 The application proposes to increase the internal usable floorspace of the existing Sports Centre by constructing a new sports hall as an extension to the existing facility linked by a subservient foyer and multifunctional sports room. The proposal will directly connect to a rowing store within the existing Sports Centre. Access will be provided into the existing building in addition to a new external access via the proposed foyer. 1,810sq.m of floor area would be created for the aforementioned sporting uses and ancillary storage space at ground floor level, with an addition 50sq.m externally accessible storage space within the undercroft of the proposed sports hall and 200sq.m of first floor level ancillary plant room space. This represents a significant increase to the existing Sports Centre, which will enhance the offer available at this sporting facility, to the benefit of members and casual users of this local service and sports provision, whilst improving the student and staff offer at the university, both of which weigh strongly in favour of the proposal. A new sports hall in addition to the existing facilities within the Sports Centre will allow for a greater range and degree of sports and activities to be undertaken concurrently, providing a broader service offer throughout the year and particularly during university sporting occasions and events. Being able to attract and retain staff and students is key for the university and enhancing its sports provision assists in this regard, though the benefits of the proposal also extend to the wider, non-university community. Given the established use in this area and the social and economic benefits the proposal would bring, it is considered that the proposed scheme is acceptable in principle, and contributes positively to the policy requirements of policies DM12, DM26, DM49 and NPPF Section 8.

7.2.2 The application form states there will be no permanent, long-term Sports Centre employment generated by the proposal, though the construction of an extension of this scale will generate significant short-term employment and economic benefits to the local area. This application has met the threshold for requiring production of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP). The ESP will need to detail how opportunities for, access to and up-skilling local people through the construction phase of the development proposal will be provided. Development Management policy DM48 (Community Infrastructure) establishes the requirement and is supported by an ESP Supplementary Planning Document. As such, a pre-commencement condition will need to be applied to any consent granted to deliver the ESP.

## 7.3 Design, scale and landscape impact upon the setting of non-designated heritage assets

7.3.1 The proposed extension is large in scale, and despite the maximum roof height being slightly lower than that of the existing Sports Centre, due to its forward projection it will partially dominate the existing building. Whereas the existing Sports Centre is sited atop of a grassed slope, the proposed extension projects beyond and over this, giving an impression of cantilevering albeit with the inclusion of pre-cast concrete column supports. The siting and orientation has been discussed at length through a pre-application process and during this current application, and the submitted Design and Access Statement details the consideration of alternatives. These discussions were an attempt to prevent the proposed extension appearing as a separate building albeit linked by a small foyer. However, from most viewpoints the proposed extension and the existing building will appear as one structure with a coherent and consistent design approach. Conditions are proposed to ensure that the materials, including their colours and finishes, marry the existing with the proposed so the design solution is not undermined.

7.3.2 Although the siting and orientation of the development may not create the appearance of a continuous frontage of one succinct building (projecting forwards 8.8m from the existing building), the benefits of the proposed design are that it creates a visual break from the massing of the existing Sports Hall. From the west perspective, the proposed extension would appear taller than the existing Sports Centre, despite having a lower overall height. However, given that the Sports Centre has a much longer western frontage length, it is considered that the proposed extension would still appear subservient to this.

- 7.3.3 The university campus is within a designated Key Urban Landscape, whilst the western side of the campus, including the application site, is also within the designated Urban Green Space. This latter policy makes exceptions for extensions and education facilities, both of which apply to this proposal, whilst the former permits development that preserves the open nature and appearance of the area and surroundings. An extension to the existing Sports Centre building would preserve the appearance of the area, as despite the scale of the development, this would be seen in context of the existing built form, and is relatively modest in relation to the surrounding playing fields and open space.
- 7.3.4 The proposed sports hall extension is to be finished predominantly in black and off-black cladding with hidden joints, with elements of similar cladding in anthracite grey colour to the subservient foyer and multifunction sports room element and the first floor plant room sited to the rear elevation of the development. Two barns retained on site and pre-dating the university use by over 100 years are present on the first OS map and considered to be non-designated heritage assets. One in particular is in close proximity to the Sports Centre and proposed extension, just 25 metres north east of the existing building, although sited at a slightly higher topography to the Sports Centre. The proposed development is just under 22 metres from the barn, and given the height of the development and particularly the removal of a significant number of trees within the setting of the barn, the proposal will certainly impact upon the setting of this non-designated heritage asset. However, given the significant changes to the site and setting of this barn over the long duration of the university use of the site, the existing setting is far removed from the historic setting of this former agricultural barn, and this existing setting does not contribute positively to this non-designated heritage asset. The barn is in close proximity to the existing Sports Centre, bowling green and associated access roads and parking facilities, and in this setting the scale of harm of the current proposal would be relatively modest and less than substantial. However, this harm should still be outweighed by public benefits of the proposal.
- 7.3.5 To the undercroft, concrete columns and concrete facing brickwork is proposed. The existing Sports Centre forms a large and dramatic structure of contemporary design and materials, occupying a prominent position although still well integrated into the landscape. Existing mature trees screen the Sports Centre, although this screening is to be partially reduced through this proposal to facilitate the extension. The proposed development is to be finished in similar contemporary materials, and these external finishes and horizontal LED element are considered to be positive solution to subtly breaking the appearance of the proposed large elevations without introducing a much greater variety of materials to the existing Sports Centre, which already present a range of materials, colours and finishes.
- 7.3.6 Given the sympathetic materials and the existing design of the strong and positive statement building towards the entrance to the University campus, the proposed extension is considered to be congruent to the existing built form. Due to its forward projection and scale of attachment to the existing building, the extension will appear distinct from existing, though to ensure it does not dominant the existing building its finishes should be matt, as gloss or satin to such large elevations could detract from the proposed extended Sports Centre. The proposed design is considered to be acceptable in the setting of the University, subject to the matte external wall finishes, and is compatible with policy DM33, DM35 and NPPF Section 12 and 16.

#### 7.4 Impact on trees and ecology

- 7.4.1 To the north of the existing Sports Centre is a sitka spruce plantation and several native trees, which are visible from the wider public domain and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the frontage of the university site, in addition to opportunities for a potential range of wildlife communities. The footprint of the proposed development and changes to land levels are within a significant portion of this aforementioned plantation and trees, and to facilitate the proposal 100 trees would need to be removed from this location. Only one of these trees is to be removed through poor condition, whilst the 96 Category B trees and 3 Category C trees would otherwise remain in situ if this development does not progress. The removal of so many high profile and semi-mature trees from one area will have potential to adversely impact the character and appearance of the area, whilst their removal could also increase the risk of failure of those intended to be retained to the north of the proposed development. Due to the location and volume of trees proposed to be felled to facilitate the proposed Sports Centre extension, the Tree Officer has objected to the application.

- 7.4.2 The existing tree plantation makes a positive impact upon the site, and helps to integrate the Sports Centre into the landscape. The loss of this plantation and the native trees would be unfortunate and must be justified through the proposal. Although other locations for the extension have not been explored in depth as part of the Design and Access Statement, this is likely to be due to the obvious constraints around the Sports Centre. To the east is an access road, established woodland and Lake Carter, whilst to the south is the main car parking facilities and vehicular access to the Sports Centre. This elevation is also partially glazed to allow natural light into the swimming pool area. Whilst land to the west is open, this slopes down significantly to designated outdoor sports playing pitch provision, which should be retained. Therefore the only location that could accommodate an extension is to the north of the existing Sports Centre.
- 7.4.3 The scale of impact upon the existing plantation, particularly in the short term, would weigh against the proposal, though when considering the planning application as a whole the public benefits of the scheme significantly outweigh this one drawback. The short term impact of felling a large quantity of mature trees cannot be mitigated, though in the long term the retained treescape to the north can be enriched with additional planting of semi-mature trees. Furthermore these new trees can include more diverse and native species than those being lost. This should be controlled through a planning condition for the hard and soft landscaping scheme for the site to at least partially mitigate the short and long term impact upon of the felling of existing mature trees.
- 7.4.4 A preliminary ecology appraisal has been submitted as part of this application, detailing that protected species and ecology does not provide a constraint to development, subject to mitigation measures and avoided nesting and hibernation periods of species. Therefore, subject to the implementation in accordance with the mitigation measures within this report, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact upon ecology, consistent with policy DM27 and Section 15 of the NPPF.
- 7.5 Sports pitch provision
- 7.5.1 The proposed development is within a designated open space for outdoors sports provision, adjacent to two full sized rugby pitches. An open space assessment was submitted with this application, detailing that a 5 metres exclusion zone around these sports pitches would be retained, whilst the proposal would enhance the sports provision at the site, albeit with internal pitches rather than outdoor provision. The proposal would result in no loss of sporting provision, despite the built form extending into the existing open area, as the proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch due to topography and existing vegetation. The development and associated hardstanding is actually over 15 metres from the edge of the sports pitch, and alongside the in-goal area where players are less likely to leave the extents of the pitch during a match. Sport England have raised no objection to the proposal, and the application is considered to improve the indoor sports and recreation offer at the university in a location that has no detrimental impact upon the usage of the existing open space. The proposal is considered to comply with policy DM26 and NPPF Section 8.
- 7.6 Highways and parking
- 7.6.1 The application proposes an increased floorspace for the Sports Centre use, but no additional parking provision forms part of this application. Beyond the dedicated car parking area approved through the original 08/00246/FUL consent for short term 2 hours parking only, the coach parking lane immediately to the east of the Sports Centre along an access road now displays signage on lampposts for ticket and display parking. The submitted Travel Assessment details this coach parking lane is used by sport centre staff when no coaches are expected. Furthermore, additional overflow parking beyond the nearby barn at the end of the access road has been granted planning permission through 12/00253/FUL. This area of overflow parking area can be used for 2 hours of free parking or with staff parking permits until 6pm weekdays. Given the location of the car park in the north west corner of the campus near the Sports Centre, vehicles parked here are more likely to be users of this sporting facility rather than staff within the wider site. However, the existing parking within and around the existing Sports Centre in addition to the floorspace through the proposal would fall well below the maximum of 1 car parking space per 22sqm of gross floor area, as stipulated in Appendix B of the Development Management DPD for the existing and proposed use.
- 7.6.2 The submitted Travel Assessment details that the majority of Sports Centre members are either staff or students, with only 13% of membership attributed to the non-university community. Although there

may be additional non-membership use of the facilities, given the high levels of student and staff membership, most of these Sports Centres users are likely to visit the site as part of a combined trip to the wider campus. Furthermore, those driving to the campus may benefit from parking passes elsewhere within the site, particularly as over two thirds of Sports Centres members are members of staff at the University. The proposed sports hall use has a maximum occupancy of 20 to 32 people at any one time, depending on the sport being played. Given the proposed use of the development, existing parking provision adjacent to the centre and within the wider site, regular bus services immediately outside the Sports Centre and separation of Sports Centre from any external neighbouring residential uses, the proposed development is considered to have no severe impact upon the public highway or parking provision. The County Highways consultee returned no adverse comment, although they would wish to see the inclusion of bus departure information displayed within the Sports Centre. This forms part of the mitigation measures within the submitted Travel Assessment, in addition to provision of additional bicycle parking provision, the implementation of which should be controlled through planning condition. Subject to this, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regards to parking and highway impacts, compatible with policy DM22.

## **7.7 Drainage, flooding and air quality**

- 7.7.1 The proposed extension is located on an existing sloping lawned area and tree plantation, offering a good degree of rainwater permeability and interception. The proposed extension will have an impermeable roof so to compensate a drainage solution, comprising a cellular storage tank to restrict flow to a drainage outfall along the north of an established wooded area to the east and towards Lake Carter, is proposed. From the areas of hardstanding to the north and east of the building, water is captured into filter drains, reducing the runoff rate back into the ground. As for foul drainage, it is proposed to connect to the existing mains sewer.
- 7.7.2 The Lead Local Flood Authority has returned a consultation response confirming that the proposed SuDS and other drainage matters are acceptable in principle, though further information is required to demonstrate that this system is achievable and sufficient to accommodate surface runoff through the proposed development. This information has been received and sent through to the Lead Local Flood Authority consultee for further comment. Subject to the proposed details satisfying this consultee, either through the currently received information and/or to be agreed through planning condition prior to implementation, the proposed development is considered to have an acceptable impact with regarding to flooding and drainage, compatible with policy DM38, DM39 and NPPF Section 14.
- 7.7.3 An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted with this application due to the scale of the proposal in addition to the proximity to Air Quality Management Areas. The overall operational air quality impacts of the development are considered to be not significant, and can be satisfactorily mitigated through the measures stipulated within the submitted assessment, which is compliant with policy DM37.

## **8.0 Planning Obligations**

- 8.1 There are no planning obligations to consider as part of this application.

## **9.0 Conclusions**

- 9.1 The proposed extension to the existing Sports Centre will improve the local service offer at the University site, to the benefit of those directly using this facility in addition to positive dispersive impacts upon the wider community. Although the massing may appear a little disjointed, given the existing Sports Centre's built form and sympathetic materials, the proposed extension will appear congruent to the existing building. The removal of a large amount of semi-mature trees cannot be satisfactorily mitigated in itself, nor the less than substantial impact upon the adjacent non-designated heritage asset, particularly in the short term. However, in the long term, growth of additional tree planting can go some way to replace the existing plantation trees and associated potential wildlife communities through additional native tree planting. On balance, the detraction of tree felling and associated impacts to facilitate the development is considered to be significantly outweighed by the social and economic benefits of expanding upon the university's existing sports offer through the proposed sports hall extension. The retained access and parking arrangements will have an acceptable cumulative highway safety impact subject the implementing the mitigation measures within the submitted Travel Assessment. Although the final reports on surface water

drainage are still awaiting final response from the relevant consultee, the surface water drainage arrangements can be resolved in due course in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority. Other matters can be satisfactorily mitigated through the implementation of the recommendations within the reports received prior to determination. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

### **Recommendation**

That Planning Permission **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard three year timescale
2. In accordance with amended plans
3. Employment and Skills Plan
4. Development carried out in accordance Preliminary Ecological Appraisal mitigation measures
5. Surface drainage details
6. Soft and hard landscaping scheme, including significant tree planting
7. Development carried out in accordance Arboriculture Implications Assessment mitigation measures
8. Development carried out in accordance Environmental Sound Survey mitigation measures
9. Development carried out in accordance with Air Quality Assessment mitigation measures
10. Development carried out in accordance Travel Assessment mitigation measures
11. Details of covered and secure cycle storage facilities
12. Matt finish to cladding

### **Article 35, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015**

In accordance with the above legislation, Lancaster City Council has made the recommendation in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the applicant to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The recommendation has been made having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

### **Background Papers**

None