

Agenda Item	A11
Application Number	21/01577/FUL
Proposal	Retrospective application for the change of use of bowling pavilion (use class F2) to radio station (sui generis), change of use of veterans club building to changing/social facility (use class F2) installation of replacement roof covering on pavilion building, and replacement of 4 timber windows with UPVC windows with detachable window security screens to the front elevation, replacement of timber door and side screen, replacement of roof coverings, soffit boards, rainwater gutters and downpipes and replacement cladding to veterans club building
Application site	45A Chester Place Lancaster Lancashire LA1 4HA
Applicant	Lancaster City Council (Property Services)
Agent	Mr James Gill
Case Officer	Mr Sam Robinson
Departure	No
Summary of Recommendation	Approve

(i) Procedural Matters

This form of development would normally be determined under the Council's Scheme of Delegation. However, the site is under the ownership of Lancaster City Council, and therefore, the application is referred to the Planning Regulatory Committee for determination. The application has been with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for an extended period of time, but this was to allow for further marketing information to be provided which was received in November 2025. The LPA is now in a position to make a recommendation on the application.

1.0 Application Site and Setting

- 1.1 The application site is Palatine Recreation Ground, which is located at the junction of Palatine Avenue, Durham Avenue and Rutland Avenue in the urban area of Lancaster. To the south of the site is a play area and tennis courts and to the north are a number of bowling greens, a football pitch and a recreation area. To the east of the site is the previous bowling pavilion building and the veterans' club building.
- 1.2 The bowling pavilion building was designed to service the park facilities of bowling and tennis when the park was in its prime. The building is split into four rooms, which were independent of each other and were only accessed via external doors. The four rooms consisted of a maintenance room (for the use of the City Council's maintenance staff and equipment), a female changing room, a male changing room and a central room (for the use of the park keeper to store and hire out equipment). There is a toilet and small kitchen facility in this area. Aesthetically the building has rendered walls,

under red clay roof tiles with timber doors and timber boarded-up windows.

- 1.3 The veterans' club building is to the south of the bowling pavilion building. It was used as a social club for ex-servicemen and women. Internally there is a kitchen and toilet facilities and seating within.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 The application has two distinct elements all of which is retrospective. Firstly, it seeks to retrospectively change the use of the bowling pavilion to a radio station. The radio station has been operating from the building since April 2016 and internally provides two studios, a reception area, toilets, kitchen, workshop and storage with some internal door installed. The roof covering has been replaced with metal tiles, ridge tiles and hip caps (with the appearance of a conventional clay roof tile).
- 2.2 Secondly, the application seeks to retrospectively change the use of the veterans' club building into a clubhouse used in association with the bowling green. To facilitate the change of use, the works to the building have included the installation of 4 replacement windows to the front elevation, replacement cladding to the front and side elevations (fibre cement Cedral lap weatherboard finished in black). Replacement timber to the door and screen to the front elevation, replacement of roof covering, soffit boards, rainwater gutters and downpipes.

3.0 Site History

- 3.1 A number of relevant applications relating to this site have previously been received by the Local Planning Authority. These include:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
89/3022	Develop toddlers play area	Permitted

4.0 Consultation Responses

- 4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

Consultee	Response
Public Realm Officer	No objection
Sports England	No comment
County Highways	No objection (Subject to conditions relating to a construction management plan and construction deliveries to be outside of peak traffic)
Fire Safety Officer	No objection

- 4.2 No responses have been received from members of the public.

5.0 Analysis

- 5.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Design
- Residential amenity
- Highways

- 5.2 **Principle of development** (NPPF Section 8; Strategic Policies and Land Allocations Development Plan Climate Emergency Review (SPLA DPD) policy SC3; and Review of the Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policies DM27 & DM56)

- 5.2.1 The bowling pavilion has been underused and empty for a number of years. The final tenants of the

building were the women's bowling club, whose last use was established to be in 2014. There was some interest from Regent Bowling Tuition Centre to use the building as a satellite tuition centre in 2015/2016, with the aim of re-forming a park bowling club, but this only lasted one season.

5.2.2 The veterans club building has been empty since 2013. The club who occupied the building decided that it would end operations due to lack of members and interest from new members. Since 2013 the building has been empty and underused.

5.2.3 Lancaster City Council advertised on their website an opportunity to let the veterans' club building for commercial and/or community usage in 2015/2016. This generated some interest and property enquiries. At the time the community radio station (Beyond Radio) showed an interest in the veterans' club building, but due to a specific date stated in the broadcasting license, it was unlikely the process for letting the veterans' club building would be completed in time. Therefore, the Council offered the pavilion bowling club to the radio station as an alternative. This was accepted and since occupation in May 2016, the radio station has invested in the building by inserting doors to the internal walls to create studios and provide a use for the building.

5.2.4 The veterans club building had a further three groups that showed interest in leasing the building and through the City Council's Public Realm Departments tender process, the tender submitted by the Palatine Projects group was accepted. Palatine Projects is a local community group, that will use the building to develop a bowling club, provide a community meeting space and store community resources to be used within the park and in association with the bowling green. In addition, a license has been granted to Palatine Projects to allow the building to be used by the wider community. Palatine Projects now occupy the veterans club.

5.2.5 Policy DM27 of the DM DPD is relevant as it seeks to retain open space, sports and recreational facilities. In particular if a development proposal involves the loss of an asset or facility, it must be demonstrated that the facilities are proposed to be replaced with equal or better provision than currently exists. In addition, policy DM56 of the DM DPD seeks to retain existing local services. Where there is a loss of a local service, the following points must be evidenced:

- Ensure that a robust and transparent marketing exercise has taken place demonstrating that the retention of the existing use is no longer economically viable or feasible. This should include a realistic advertising period of at least 12 months at a realistic price, making use of local media sources and maintaining a log of all enquiries received;
- Ensure that alternative provision of the key services exists nearby; and
- Ensure that the current/previous use no longer retains an economic and social value for the community it serves.

5.2.6 With regards to this application, the bowling pavilion club would have been identified as a recreational facility/building that was used in connection with Palatine Recreation Ground, as well as a building that provided a community service. As such, both policies DM27 and DM56 are applicable to this element. With regards to the veteran's club building, which served a wider community and offered a local service, only policy DM56 is applicable.

5.2.7 As outlined above, the supporting statement confirms that the bowling pavilion club was not formally advertised by the Council, but Beyond Radio showed interest in the property and moved in 2016. As such, the loss was not replaced by equivalent or better, high quality provision (as required by policy DM27) nor was a robust marketing exercise advertising for a 12-month period undertaken (as required by policy DM56) prior to Beyond Radio moving into the property or when the application was first submitted to the local planning authority.

5.2.8 To address these concerns, a further marketing exercise was undertaken by the Council in February 2023 asking for expressions of interest from a local community organisation to provide a local service and/or support for the existing recreational use. No interest was received within a 12-month period. In addition to this, the occupation of the veteran's club by Palatine Projects has occurred and this now provides an equivalent provision for the recreational facility and local community service that would have otherwise been lost from the conversion of the bowling pavilion to a radio station.

5.2.9 The veterans' club was previously a meeting place for ex-service personnel, but as outlined in the supporting statement, it has not been used for this purpose since 2013 and has suffered vandalism.

Its change of use results in the loss of this local service in its original form; however, it has been replaced by another community use through Palatine Projects. The Local Planning Authority has also identified alternative provision via the Bay Veterans Association, located in the Arndale Centre, Morecambe. Although outside Lancaster, this facility is well connected and in a highly sustainable location. The applicant confirms that the veterans' club was advertised for five months, attracting several interested groups, though none were for the veterans' community it once served. Alternative provision does exist, albeit within the wider district.

- 5.2.10 Both properties have been identified as providing a local service and whilst a replacement local service and a replacement recreational provision have been provided, the veterans club has not met the full 12-month marketing exercise required by DM56. However, as outlined in the supporting statement, both buildings within the site were vacant for extended periods of time and suffered from acts of vandalism. The marketing undertaken at the time, suggests no interest that would have provided the same local service. The change of use of the buildings continues to provide a local service and recreational provision within the site. As a result, the buildings have been refurbished, and the bowling club has been re-established with bowling competitions being undertaken within the park increasing footfall to the area. The occupation of the building by Palatine Projects has also seen refurbishment of the tennis courts and the creation of a small 'woodland walk'. These refurbishments of the site provide significant benefits in terms of the regeneration of the site, public realm and wider area as well as improving the health and wellbeing of the nearby residents.

5.3 **Design (NPPF Section 12; Review of the Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policy DM29.**

- 5.3.1 The physical works that have been undertaken, including the proposed materials to the bowling pavilion club and the veterans' club building are deemed to be an improvement to the appearance of both structures which had fallen into disrepair. Whilst the proposed materials are different from those existing, they would not be out of character and will be an enhancement when viewed from within the streetscene. Accordingly, the development would not conflict with policy DM29 and Section 12 of the Framework.

5.4 **Residential amenity (NPPF Section 12; Review of the Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policy DM29.**

- 5.4.1 The retrospective change of use of the bowling pavilion building to a radio station and the veterans' club building to a changing/social facility are considered to have a minimal impact upon the surrounding residential amenity. The radio station will use the building more intensely than the previous use of the bowling club, but it is considered not to have an adverse impact on the neighbouring residents' amenity as it will be akin to a low scale office use and would not give rise to significant amounts of noise. It is contended that the proposed use provides a positive image and presence for the park, which has contributed to reduced vandalism since the building has been in use. Accordingly, the development would not conflict with policy DM29 of the DM DPD and Section 12 of the Framework.

5.5 **Highways (NPPF Section 9 and 12; Review of the Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policies DM29 and DM60)**

- 5.5.1 No off-street parking is proposed or can be provided, due to the topography of the site. There is ample on-street parking provided on Palatine Avenue, Rutland Avenue and Durham Avenue. County Highways have raised no objections to the scheme, suggesting the use of two conditions relating to a construction management plan and construction deliveries to be outside of peak traffic. Given the small scale nature of the works and that the proposed development is retrospective, the recommended conditions are not necessary. Accordingly, the development would not conflict with policy DM29 and DM60 of the DM DPD and Sections 9 and 12 of the Framework.

6.0 Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.1 As outlined above, whilst the full 12-month marketing of the veteran's club has not been undertaken, the site will continue to provide for a recreational facility and a local service. This provides significant benefits to the local population and has aided regeneration of the wider site. The replacement

materials proposed to both the buildings are considered an improvement to the appearance of buildings that had previously fallen into disrepair. The re-occupation and reuse of the buildings has also had a positive impact, particularly through the social and economic contributions it makes to the Lancaster District and the active reuse of part of the site. As such, the application is considered to comply with the development plan when read as a whole and is therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission BE GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

Condition no.	Description	Type
1	Development to accord with plans	Standard

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

Lancaster City Council has made the decision 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 decision has been taken 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