

Notes from the meeting between Borden Parish Council, Quinn Estates & Sittingbourne Rugby Union Football Club held at the Pavilion, Wises Lane on 2nd October at 2:30 pm.

To discuss Reserved Matters application 23/500263/REM.

In attendance; Cllr Bolas (JB), Cllr Cole (GC), Ben Geering (BG) from Quinn Estates, Roger Down (RD) from Sittingbourne RUFC & Teresa Millum(TM) – Parish Clerk.

The Clerk read out the Parish Council resolutions in regard to this meeting being held as follows;

To consider a request received from Quinn Estates to meet with them, Swale Planning and Sittingbourne Rugby Club regarding the deferred planning application 23/500263/REM, to discuss the Parish Council concerns raised at the SBC Planning Committee meeting on 17th August.

Resolutions were made by the Parish Council as follows:

The Parish Council agreed to a meeting with Quinns the Rugby Club and Swale Borough Council on the understanding that our representatives will not be able to make any decisions and any decisions requested will be brought back to the Full Council meeting.

The Parish Council agreed to raise further concerns in relation to the lighting and noise that would emanate from the balcony and function room for any event. The Parish Council would also like the building signage to prominently display the Community Hub and request that the landscaping greatly reduces the visual impact of the building on the surrounding rural area, also the structure of the management committee is to be defined.

RD reminded that according to the S106 the agreement is to have representatives from BPC, Swale Borough and a Swale Officer on the Management Committee.

GC advised that there is a proposal to change the S106 agreement from Swale representatives to Councillors.

JB suggested at this meeting points raised by BPC are discussed, then also the objections that SBC felt they needed further information on.

BG advised a letter has gone to SBC to tackle each of the points.

JB Went through notes from the Parish Council meeting that the BPC in conjunction with their original objections would like to add:

- Reiteration that the building is a Community Social Hub and not simply a Rugby Club.
- The signage on the building must reflect the Community Hub status.
- There is considerable concern about the light and noise impact, particularly on the nature reserve, that the functions room opening doors and windows, especially on the large balcony will impose. So looking at what can be incorporated in the design to mitigate against those problems.
- That the building should blend more into a rural setting particularly to ensure that landscaping greatly reduces the impact of the structure on the surrounding countryside. Anything that can be done to demonstrate how that has been considered to its maximum possible benefit.
- Formation of the managing committee needs to be agreed to ensure that the local community is appropriately represented.
- Whilst not subject to this particular application early notification of the concern of the training or evening match lighting. Which we know is another subject in the original planning consent.

BG Went through some of the matters raised at the Committee meeting.

- The number of toilets, came up in the original Parish Council comments as well as raised on the Committee night.
- Lighting.
- Design and green credentials.
- Car parking arrangements arrangement and access for coaches in particular whether coaches would be used.

In the time since the Committee meeting Quinn Estates has been looking at the design of the building and responding to those queries in particular so when it goes back to the Planning Committee, there has been a clear response to show that they are trying to overcome these points and supply more information where needed.

They have worked closely with the Rugby Club on some of these answers to try to give a bit more of a feel for how they function as a club and their experience over many years.

Toilets – points from discussion

BG the plans show lots of toilets but think there was a misunderstanding as to what was in the changing rooms and what will be available to the public.

The ground and first floor plans were viewed by all and the following points were included in the discussion:

- The toilets on the ground floor are close to the changing rooms, the changing rooms can be locked off and made unavailable.
- A further 2 toilets located on the first floor accessible via either a lift or the stairs, and have baby changing facilities.
- The reason for not a lot of toilets on the first floor is due to the size of the community social space which was set out in the S106 agreement to maximise the space.
- The predominant toilets are on the ground floor due to the size of the kitchen space on the first floor no more toilets could be added here.
- All toilets have disabled facilities. There is one disabled toilet on each floor.
- The S106 agreement sets out the number of toilets and complies with the HSE advice on workspaces.
- The signage does not indicate if a toilet is men's or women's. It will be up to the management committee to decide on signage.
- The value of more public toilets without the need to go into the player's area.
- Coloured floors would help to identify public and player areas and also help with the natural flow and be beneficial for people with visual impairments.
- There are 3 toilets that are completely outside any area associated with the changing rooms, one on the ground floor and 2 on the first floor.

Design points from discussion:

BG advised that at the Planning Committee meeting concerns were raised over materials, but it was not expressed why it was not liked, so looked at incorporating more timber to assimilate into the landscape.

The building and landscaping plans were reviewed by all and the following points were included in the discussion:

- The original design sent to planners and conservation had flat roofs at the side but the monopitched roof had a better appearance, so amended, and incorporated where solar heating can be included on top.

- The look of the vertical cladding was questioned as opposed to horizontal cladding which may look better.
- The ongoing cost of the cladding maintenance as it ages was questioned.
- The original design's contemporary character as a new landmark statement was not comparable with a rural setting. The building's look was too symmetrical and needed to be softened. Trellises and different shrubbery to soften the landscape and break up the symmetry of the building were discussed to help achieve this.
- The façade will only be seen once on the premises.

Lighting points from the discussion

- The windows are aluminium and are glazed a lot of the light egress could be reduced by the material chosen and a lot of the uniformity could be changed by the materials used and sympathetic colours could reduce the glow effect. (Looking at the balcony).
- Although advised that a full ecology assessment has been carried out who were not concerned. It was pointed out that KCC ecology may not be aware of protected species in hedgerows.
- BG clarified the possibility of lowering the lights or putting screening on the windows will help stop the light coming out.
- A Breeam assessment for daytime and nighttime lighting levels has been carried out. But to make sure lighting concerns from the parish are overcome, BG can get lighting experts to make sure light spills are minimised. On planning requirement sympathetic lighting when lights are on and BG will speak to the case officer as a reasonable approach.
- Regarding light spilling out over the Nature Reserve, matches are seasonal and games are always played in natural light.
- Regarding balls going into the Nature Reserve, it was advised that the trees are at the back of pitches but not on the side of second-team pitches. The trees are in excess of 40ft in height and do not tend to lose balls at either end of the pitch.

Parking

- It was advised that the only time parking is not sufficient is when the junior tournament is run, but they have an existing arrangement for the Westlands school to use their car park. They have seen a maximum of 6 coaches in 20 years on the other site.
- It was questioned that all the car park figures are on 2 pitches, not 3.
- It is envisaged that youngsters play on the 3rd pitch and training and there is a need to have a community arrangement with the school, as part of S106 requirements, which potentially brings another car park into use.
- Looking at the plans BG advised that they do have the ability to put in some further parking spaces if required.

There was a recap of items discussed to ensure all areas stated at the start of the meeting had been covered.

Signage

At the moment the signage is only a shield and if the community hub name and logo are also required, the Rugby Club logo can be taken off for now.

Noise

- Regarding the noise from the balcony, the doors would only be opened when the matches were being played and during evening use it would be a management issue regarding the times the doors were opened and closed.

- Could go the Swale Planning re conditions. if Swale wanted could try to put a planning condition on i.e. don't use the balcony after 9 p.m.

Actions that BG will take back for further consideration before presenting updated plans to BPC

1. The planting of shrubs to break the symmetry of building design and possible trellises.
2. Look at vertical vs horizontal cladding options and draw a new design.
3. Look at reducing lighting by considering lowering light levels and/or putting film on windows.
4. Take the lighting issue back to Swale planning with a view to making the building lighting and light overspill subject to special conditions and the recommendation of a lighting expert.
5. Speak to the case officer regarding increasing the number of parking spaces and update landscape and car park plans
6. Noise - will go to the planning officer regarding planning conditions. The Parish Council will form part of the management committee, and license and if Swale wanted could try to put a planning condition on i.e. don't use the balcony after 9 p.m.
7. Change to floor colour to mark changing rooms from other areas.
8. Remove the Rugby Club signage from drawings
9. Exterior coating of window and balcony structure in matt would deflect light.

Clerk to send address to send new plans to.

*****See Appendix for further updates*****

Appendix 1

Updates from Quinn Estates since the meeting on 2nd October 2023

03.10.23 update you on progress from Quinn Estates.

1. Clague are working on a revised design that includes horizontal boarding to the façade that it was suggested was explored – I will share this with you and officers (copied in) asap. Signage on the building to be removed from drawings.
2. We are happy to accept a planning condition wording that ensures the internal lighting design minimises light spill from the balcony/windows, perhaps as an amended to the proposed condition for external lighting.
3. Operating hours of the building are likely to be controlled by licensing and the management company, unless a planning condition is imposed.
4. The distances from the goal posts to the site boundary with the Borden Nature Reserve, together with the strong boundary already in place and additional planting means that netting was agreed to be unlikely to be needed.
5. Plans will also change the floor plan colour so that the toilets are shown in the communal area and not the changing rooms. Detailed design will cover materials and is not a planning matter.
6. The attached landscape plans show far more detail on the planting areas than on the site coloured masterplan. I would hope this resolves Councillors concerns over breaking up elevations and further planting around the building. This will be updated to reflect the below (5).
7. We have carried out a review of the car park – we think that an additional 11 bays can be provided without significant losses of planting/green space, increasing the number of spaces to 76, providing additional capacity should it be required in the future. We have designed 4 bays to the front of the building that would logically be best suited to drop offs/pick ups rather than longer stay, which I think from a practical level could be useful.

As discussed our aim is to get these amendments to Swale BC asap so that any changes will be considered as part of the current consultation at the next Borden PC meeting on 19th October. This is complicated as we need multiple disciplines to update plans (architects, transport and landscape) but all have been made aware of the urgency.

09.10.23 update you on progress from Quinn Estates.

Please find attached an amended car park layout and amended elevations for your consideration.

In short – we have increased the number of parking spaces from 65 to 72 with some internal changes to the layout. We have also shown a layby/drop off area to the front of the clubhouse that can accommodate a further 4 cars so that if the car park is being heavily used there is space for those picking up/dropping off to use without utilising a parking space, improving the operation of the car park and movements in and out of spaces – so a total of 76 spaces.

The additional spaces provide further capacity in the car park, ensuring it more than meets the needs of the club and community facility, with the excess parking also giving comfort that when the 3rd pitch in the open space for later phases of development comes forward that there is also parking available at the main rugby club/community building site in addition to any provided alongside the open space.

We are updating the layout plan and landscaping scheme to reflect this change.

Please also see link here to updated elevations reproduced–
These show the planting from the planting scheme on the elevations, as well as 2 options for cladding (horizontal and vertical) following discussion with the PC.
We have no major preference and could be led by the PC on which option they prefer if SBC also happy with either?

I hope that these changes, together with the information below will allow the PC to remove their objection to the application.

09.10.23 Further update you on progress from BG.

Swale officers have confirmed a strong preference for the vertical cladding version.