

**CHASE NEW HOMES LIMITED**

**FORMER WALDEN SCHOOL**

**SAFFRON WALDEN**

**PINS REFERENCE: S62A/22/0000002**

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**SPORTS FACILITIES NOTE IN RESPONSE TO SPORT  
ENGLAND COMMENTS**

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1. Sport England has made an objection to the scheme on the basis of the loss of the sports hall and other matters with regard to Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The loss of the gym building is already addressed in the Planning Statement and must be weighed in the planning balance.
3. The slight incursion onto the playing field is necessary to provide the best scheme possible for the Site, as it provides access to parking for the swimming pool and the main parking area, which would otherwise have to be accessed from The Avenue to the south. This would cause additional traffic movements into The Avenue which would have a potential amenity issue and not represent the optimum manner in which to bring the Site back into use. Sport England explicitly state that the new changing rooms and parking for the swimming pool would be '*a positive proposal that would offer potential to help address needs identified in the Council's strategy and accord with Sport England Planning for Sport principles especially principles 6 and 7 which relate to enhancing existing facilities and securing use of existing facilities.*'
4. The incursion into the playing field has been kept to a minimum, and it must be acknowledged that by July 2022 it will be five years since the playing field was last used. The benefits of the scheme have already been listed in the Planning Statement and we respectfully request that the Inspector consider the scheme as a whole and the optimum layout when weighing in the planning balance. It is our view that the benefits outweigh the harm when the Council has no five year land supply, no adopted site allocations and has yet to publish its regulation 18 Local Plan. It is clearly some years away from having an adopted position on resolving its housing need, a process that inevitably requires decisions on competing land uses to be made.
5. Other matters such as the loss of elements ancillary to the playing field must be considered against the benefits. The swimming pool parking could also be used in conjunction with other recreational elements on the adjoining field if need be, although the sustainable location of the Site should encourage alternative transport to the car.
6. Sport England as a non-statutory consultee supports the principle of re-opening the swimming pool but has raised concerns about the deliverability of this proposal, providing advice on matters it believes need to be considered if weight is to be given to re-opening the pool as a benefit of the scheme to offset the impacts of the development.
7. Sport England has stated that bringing the pool back into use is listed as a key benefit to mitigate any harm to heritage assets in the Planning Statement. Our position remains that there is no harm to the heritage assets. It appears that Sport England has overstated our position. The swimming pool, the MUGA and the meeting room are all listed in one bullet point (out of nine) regarding benefits of the scheme. The pool is not listed as a '*key benefit to mitigate any harm to heritage assets*' as per Sport England's response, and we do not contend that the application should turn on the provision of the swimming pool to outweigh harm.

8. It is a fact however that the swimming pool has been closed for a number of years and been subject to vandalism. Bringing it back into use will, as stated in the application documents, clearly be a benefit of the scheme.
9. The concerns from Sport England as non-statutory consultee on the swimming pool are two-fold:
  - Whether it is economically viable to bring the pool back into use
  - The feasibility of the operational viability of the pool.

#### Economic viability to bring the pool back into use

10. The Financial Viability Assessment submitted with the planning application includes in Appendix 4 the *Stace Construction Build Costs* associated with bringing the buildings back into use, allocating £558,274.00 to refurbish the swimming pool and build the new changing rooms. The summary on pg 64 of the viability PDF lists this figure. Stace are independent quantity surveyors who compiled the costs subsequent to a series of visits to the Site. This is considered a reliable assessment of the costs of bringing the pool back into use and sufficient for the purposes of the planning application.
11. Appropriate funds are therefore allocated as part of the residential development to ensure that the swimming pool can be brought back into use.

#### Feasibility to consider operational viability of the swimming pool

12. The primary source of funding for the ongoing viability of the pool is via the service charge associated with the residential use of the Site. A breakdown is shown below of the costs of the pool and how it will be apportioned to each property. This is considered to be a sensible and sustainable amount and it is expected that the wider community use will provide additional income that should lower the service charge for future residents. While the wider use of the swimming pool is yet to be determined, it is expected that additional revenue could be generated by community use, and this will reduce this element of the service charge for future residents.

Swimming pool running costs based on service charge only

<b>Pool Services</b>	<b>Breakdown</b>	<b>Cost per year</b>	<b>Cost per home per year</b>
Pool Energy	Pool & Changing Room Heating	£24,000.00	£250.00
Water	Pool Water Supply	£2,000.00	£20.83
Pool Maintenance	Pool Maintenance Contract & Equipment incl	£12,000.00	£125.00
Cleaning	Daily Pool Area and Changing Room Cleaning	£12,000.00	£125.00
Insurance	Public Liability Insurance	£7,000.00	£72.92
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£57,000.00</b>	<b>£593.75</b>

13. With regard to the swimming pool we have an appropriate financial allocation for the refurbishment to bring it back into use and a credible service charge for residents that will service its running costs which will be further aided by income from community use. Sport England has raised legitimate issues with funding a small pool facility, and the dual use as a both a residents and community facility presents how a viable entity could exist.