

Application Number 07/2022/00798/FUL

Gregson Lane Community Centre
Gregson Lane
Hoghton

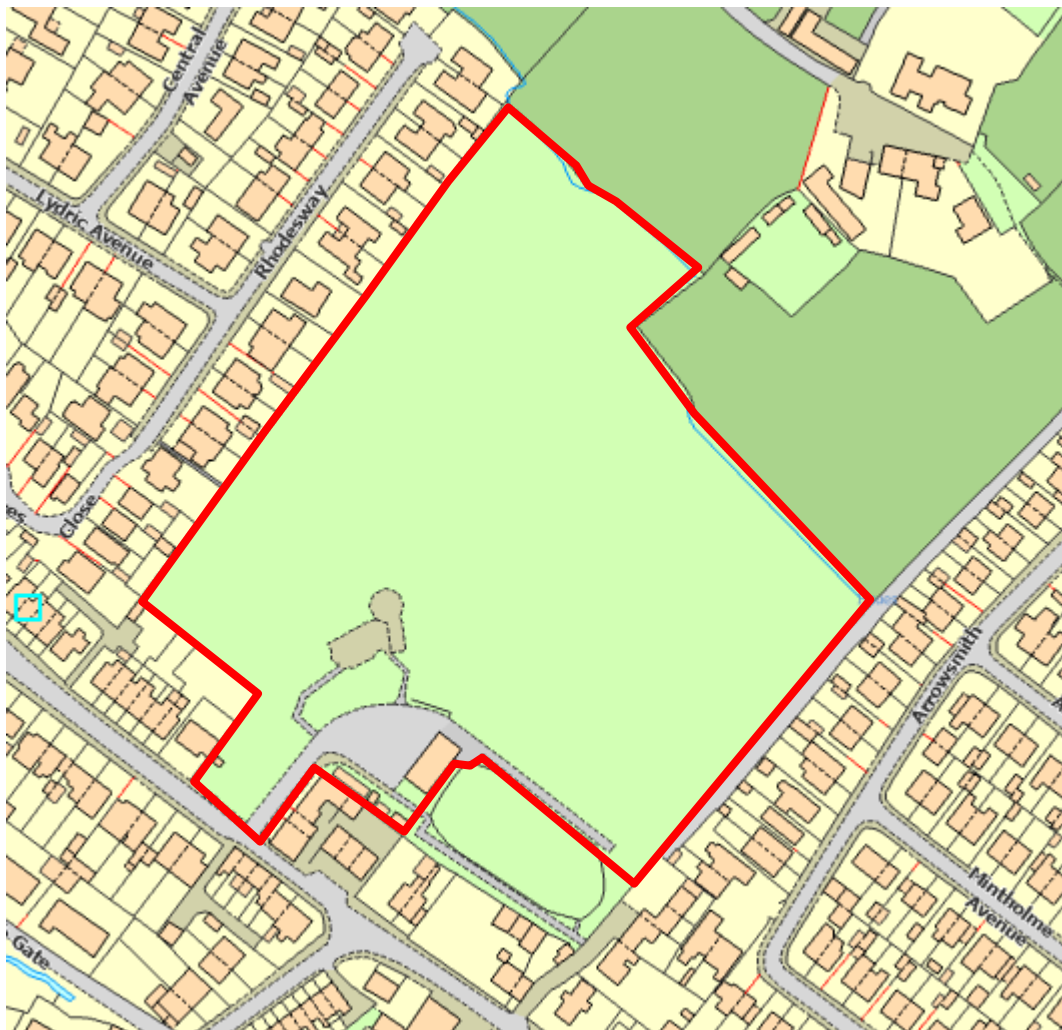
Applicant Mrs J Gibson

Development Erection of new community centre following demolition of existing, and associated works

Officer Recommendation **Approval with Conditions**

Officer Debbie Roberts

Date application valid 22.10.2022
Target Determination Date 15.11.2022
Extension of Time 12.12.2022



1. Report Summary

1.1. The applicant proposes erection of a new community centre following demolition of the existing, and associated works as described in full at Section 4 (below). The existing centre is a portacabin/wooden sectional style building, includes asbestos which has been in situ for more than 40 years and is in a bad state of repair.

1.2. In response to publicity four residents have responded two who object and two supporting. Comments raised by statutory consultees have been dealt with either by amendments to the scheme or by condition

1.3. In policy and spatial separation terms the proposal is considered compliant, and having regard to the comments of statutory bodies and the following commentary, it is recommended that the application should be **approved subject to the imposition of conditions**

2. Application Site and Surrounding Area

2.1. Gregson Lane Community Centre is a small, community building with adjacent parking area located off Gregson Lane, Houghton. A number of new and old storage containers and what appear to be changing rooms also line the southern boundary between the site and Gregson Lane properties.

2.2. To the rear is a large playing field screened by mature hedgerow. A brook runs around the boundary, and east of the building is a children's play park beyond which is Arrowsmith Drive (residential).

2.3. West of the site are the rear gardens of dwellings on Gregson Lane and Rhodesway which are separated by playing pitches and the sites main access point. Commercial and residential properties span the eastern side of the access and face the access across Gregson Lane.

3. Site Context / Planning History

- 07/2013/0168/FUL – 6m protective fencing between cricket pitch and playground. Approved May 2013
- 07/2018/6475/FUL – Erection of 75 residential units (enabling development on Daub Hall Lane) and two-storey community centre. Refused 2018 on the basis that the housing development on Daub Hall Lane was not policy compliant. This was enabling development to finance the community centre which in principle however appeared acceptable.

4. Proposal

4.1. The applicant proposes erection of a new community centre following demolition of the existing, and associated works. The existing centre is a portacabin/wooden sectional style building, includes asbestos which has been in situ for more than 40 years and is in a bad state of repair.

4.2. Proposal drawings show a flat roofed structure with a footprint of 21.2m x 11.9m, and a roof height of 3m. A small canopy would be erected at the front entrance. Three sets of patio doors would face the cricket field whilst facing the car park are entrance doors and windows. Obscurely glazed WC and store windows would face the existing storage containers which screen the rear of properties along Gregson Lane, and two doors leading into the bar area

would open towards the playground. The building would be constructed in grey plastic and cedar cladding, with anthracite grey windows, doors and rainwater goods. Drainage would connect to existing foul and surface water systems

4.3. The applicant's statement notes that there would be a large centre for community meetings, groups family celebrations etc with ancillary kitchen, storage and WC space. In addition, there would be a separate bar/meeting room which could be hired with the main centre or separately, and although the bar is reported in the accompanying statement as being mobile, it is noted on plans as a permanent area; the assumption being that it will be there for the majority of the time.

4.4. The building would be accessible – something the current centre does not benefit from – and supports the aim of Gregson Green charity which is '*to provide sports and recreational facilities, including a building for the residents of Gregson Lane, Coupe Green and surrounding areas*'. The centre is important to the local community, but its current condition is now such that it is not fit for purpose.

4.5. The new centre would be held in trust by Gregson Green charity on a long term (90+ year) lease from South Ribble Borough Council.

4.6. Opening hours are proposed at Monday to Wednesday 8am to 11pm, Thursday 8am to 11.30pm, Friday and Saturday 8am till 1am and Sunday 8am to midnight. These are as per the existing premises licence hours.

5. Summary of Supporting Documents

5.1. The application is accompanied by the suite of documents identified by recommended condition 2

6. Representations

6.1. Summary of Publicity

6.1.1. One site notice has been posted, and 101 neighbouring properties consulted. Two letters of objection and two in support have been received

In Objection

- No ramp on side elevation of cricket pavilion
- Only the main entrance is accessible by ramp – no other level access
- Respondent questions why '*money is to be wasted on a portakabin*' rather than a brick-built structure
- Building will be an '*eyesore, not a legacy*'
- No solar generation and subject to market tariffs (*energy?*) – project sustainability questionable

Other comments have been made which are not material planning considerations and therefore cannot be taken into account

- Questionable affordability costs
- Funding shortfall/potential insolvency puts South Ribble Council (SRBC) at risk
- Legal challenge following lack of formal vote (as required by trust) will delay project

In Support

- Centre is no longer fit for purpose and looks ‘an eyesore’
- More user-friendly facility
- ‘Prefer a brick-built structure but better than nothing’

7. Summary of Responses

7.1. **Lancashire County Council Highways** note that the application is a like for like replacement of the existing community centre and will be accessed via an existing access on to Gregson Lane. Gregson lane is an unclassified road with a 20mph speed limit fronting the site access. While the access road with Gregson Lane is not ideal in terms of visibility to the south-east, there does not appear to be any record of accidents associated with its use. The LCC accident five-year data bases indicate only one slight incident recorded on Gregson Lane in the vicinity of the junction, which appears to be of a nature that would not be worsened by the proposals. Whilst any accident is regrettable, the highway network surrounding the site is considered to have a good accident record and indicates there is no underlying issue which the proposed development would exacerbate.

Subject to suitable conditions with regard to demolition and construction, LCC are of the opinion that the proposed development would not have a severe impact on highway safety or capacity within the immediate vicinity of the site.

7.2. **Lancashire Constabulary (ALO)** recommends that the new community centre is built to achieve Secured by Design (SBD) Commercial certification. Whilst the scheme is designed to be an inviting environment for young people and members of the community, ALO has experience of community buildings in Lancashire where high levels of anti-social behaviour have been reported, including inappropriate gatherings, nuisance and anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. As a result, design features that are known to attract anti-social behaviour such as covered areas, recessed spaces, climbing aids and outdoor seating areas should be designed out of the scheme. ALO advice would be included as an informative note to any decision granted.

7.3. **Ecology Consultant** – the accompanying survey reports that demolition (and re-development) proposals will have no adverse direct or indirect effect on statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation. There are no priority habitat or semi-natural habitats present on site, and no rare or invasive plant species were detected. There is no evidence of current or previous use of the community centre building by roosting bats or nesting birds and the building is of negligible suitability for roosting bats; no further bat surveys are required to inform the demolition. Precautionary conditions relating to nesting birds, protected species and requiring mitigation in line with the report’s findings are recommended

7.4. **Environmental Health** have no objections subject to conditions relating to construction management and electric vehicle charging points

7.5. **Lead Local Flood Authority** – as this scheme is classed as a ‘minor’ scheme for LLFA, it is below the threshold for assessment and they have no comments to make

7.6. **Parks** – no comments to make

7.7. **United Utilities** – despite several requests UU have not responded. They did confirm however that a similar proposal was acceptable in principle subject to sustainable drainage principles. As the proposed centre would connect to existing systems the assumption is that advice would remain the same, but as a precautionary measure pre commencement conditions relating to foul and surface water are added to this recommendation

8. Material Considerations

8.1. Principle Of Development

8.1. The development site is allocated as Existing Built Up Area by Policy B1 of the South Ribble Local Plan. The playing field surrounding is allocated as Green Infrastructure (Policy G7 refers) but will not be affected by the proposal

8.2. Local Plan policies B1 (Existing Built Up Area) in line with policies G17 (Design Criteria) and F1 (Parking Standards) allows for development which complies with plan requirements relating to access, parking provision and servicing; which would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area, and would not adversely affect the amenity of nearby residents. The South Ribble Residential Design SPD echoes these sentiments but in a more prescribed manner.

8.3. The proposal is well designed and will bring visual betterment to the site following demolition of the existing, very untidy centre. As the centre is not visible from the highway it would not impact on or affect the street scene, and parking is to adopted standards but would be upgraded with the addition of a charging point. Subject to relevant conditions the scheme is considered acceptable in terms of these design policies

8.2. Additional Policy Background

Additional policy of marked relevance to this proposal is as follows:

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- The NPPF at Para 11: presumes in favour of sustainable development which for decision making means approving development which accords with the development plan unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the framework as a whole. Other NPPF chapters of marked interest are:
- Chapter 9: Promoting sustainable transport – this encourages opportunities for alternatives to travel by car (cycle, walking, public transport) with development which is close to appropriate facilities and employment options
- Chapter 12: Achieving Well Designed Places attaches great importance to the design of the built environment which contributes positively to making better places for people.
- Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change – the planning system supports the transition to a lower carbon future taking account of flood risk and climate change.
- Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment – when determining planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity as reflected by Core Strategy Policy 22

Central Lancashire Core Strategy

- Policy 1: Locating Growth focusses growth and investment on well-located, brownfield sites within key service and urban areas of the Borough.
- Policy 3: Travel encourages alternative, sustainable travel methods to reduce dependence on motor vehicles.

- Policy 27: Sustainable Resources and New Development aims to improve the quality of development by facilitating higher standards of construction, greater accessibility and ensuring that sustainable resources are incorporated into new development.
- Policy 17: Design of New Buildings requires new development to take account of the character and appearance of the local area.
- Policy 22: Biodiversity & Geodiversity aims to conserve, protect and seek opportunities to enhance and manage the biological and geological assets of the area
- Policy 26: Crime & Community Safety seeks to reduce crime levels and improve community safety by encouraging the inclusion of Secured by Design principles in new development.
- Policy 29: Water Management seeks to improve water quality and flood management by appraising, managing and reducing flood risk in all new development.

South Ribble Local Plan

- In addition to site allocation policy B1 (above), the following are also pertinent:
- Policy A1: Developer Contributions – new development is expected to contribute towards mitigation of impact upon infrastructure, services and the environment, by way of Section 106 agreement and/or CIL contributions.
- Policy F1: Parking Standards requires all development proposals to provide car parking and servicing space in accordance with parking standards adopted by the Council.
- Policy G16 –Biodiversity and Nature Conservation protects, conserves and enhances the natural environment at a level commensurate with the site’s importance and the contribution it makes to wider ecological networks.
- Policy G17: Design Criteria for New Development considers design in general terms, and impact of the development upon highways safety, the extended locale and the natural environment.
- Chapter J: Tackling Climate Change looks to reduce energy use and carbon dioxide emissions in new developments; encouraging the use of renewable energy sources.

South Ribble Residential Design SPD discusses design in very specific terms and is relevant with regards to separation between properties in and beyond the site bounds.

8.3. Other Matters

8.3.1. Spatial Separation - The South Ribble Residential Design SPD states that there should be 21m between directly facing habitable room windows, and 13m between any habitable room window and facing blank wall or gable (Paras C1.8 and C3.7 respectively).

8.3.2. Properties around the site edges enjoy suitable spatial separation. Those in the south-west would have around 26m between rear elevations and the side which includes only obscurely glazed windows. Storage containers and some mature trees also sit along this boundary and offer partial screening. Properties in the north, west and east are 211m, 110m and 92m distance respectively. Impact by virtue of loss of privacy or residential amenity as a result is not anticipated

8.3.3. *Public Rights of Way* – none within the site but public right of way 7-2-FP-121 and 7-2-FP-119 run along the northern and eastern boundaries. None would be affected by development.

8.3.4. *Construction Standards* - Any approved non-residential building over 500m² must be constructed to at least BREEAM 'very good' or 'excellent' standards which would be secured by condition, but as this scheme is for 253m² floor area these conditions have not been imposed. 10% of communal parking spaces should also provide for charging points but as the scheme does not amend the existing car park which is relatively small, one charger servicing two vehicles is considered sufficient.

8.3.5. *Developer Contributions*

8.3.5.1. Local Plan Policy A1 (Developer Contributions) expects that most new development will contribute towards mitigation against impact on infrastructure, services and the environment. Contributions would be secured where appropriate through planning obligations (Section 106 agreement) and/or Community Infrastructure Levy. CIL however is not payable on community facilities

9. Conclusion

9.8. On balance, the proposal which is relatively minor in nature is deemed to be in accordance with relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, Central Lancashire Core Strategy, South Ribble Local Plan 2012 and South Ribble Residential Design SPD. There are no statutory objections, and in design and spatial separation terms the scheme is fully compliant. It is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions