



## Planning Services

# COMMITTEE REPORT

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### APPLICATION DETAILS

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<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	7/2012/0027/DM
<b>FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:</b>	Change of use from warehouse to indoor soccer facility with associated facilities
<b>NAME OF APPLICANT:</b>	Mr Alun Armstrong
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	Unit 4 George Reynolds Industrial Estate
<b>ELECTORAL DIVISION:</b>	Shildon
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	David Gibson, Planning Officer 03000 261057, <a href="mailto:david.gibson@durham.gov.uk">david.gibson@durham.gov.uk</a>

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

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#### Site

1. The application site is located within the George Reynolds Industrial Estate, which is situated on the southern edge of Shildon adjacent to the All Saints Industrial Estate to the north, and immediately to the east of the A6072 Bishop Auckland, Shildon, Darlington main road from which the estate is accessed. To the east and south of the estate boundaries, the surrounding land is in agricultural use. The industrial estate comprises some 9.4 hectares of land, of which around 5.1 hectares is developed, including the single warehouse building with associated car parking which is the subject of this application. The building is currently vacant and has been for a number of years.

#### Proposals

2. Planning permission is sought for the change of use the existing 3235sqm industrial warehouse building to an indoor soccer centre including some six individual pitches together with associated facilities of male and female changing areas, cafeteria, office and meeting space. The cafeteria, changing facilities and meeting rooms would utilise around 10% of the floorspace of the building. Minor external alterations are proposed to form a public entrance together with the insertion of windows.
3. The application is reported to committee as the proposal constitutes major development and represents a departure from the development plan.

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## **PLANNING HISTORY**

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4. There is no relevant planning history for the application site.

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## **PLANNING POLICY**

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### **NATIONAL POLICY**

5. The Government has now published its *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, which replaces all *Planning Policy Statements and Guidance notes*. The Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. The Framework sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In terms of implementation, the Framework sets out that for the 12 months from the day of publication, decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited degree of conflict with this Framework. In other cases following this 12 months period due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework. In particular it is of note that at paragraph 12, it is highlighted that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.
6. Of relevant to this particular proposal, is that, whilst PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, has been replaced by the NPPF, the Planning for Town Centres: Practice guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach has not been replaced. The guide explains an approach that LPAs could take to develop town centre strategies and identify appropriate sites; the role and scope of need and impact assessments and the methodologies that may be employed in carrying out such assessments and the key data inputs, and how to use these to help guide and inform policy and decision making.

*The NPPF can be accessed at:*

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/>

### **REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

7. The North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008, sets out the broad spatial development strategy for the North East region for the period of 2004 to 2021. In July 2010, however, the Local Government Secretary signalled his intention to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies with immediate effect, and that this was to be treated as a material consideration in subsequent planning decisions. This was successfully challenged in the High Court in November 2010, thus for the moment reinstating the RSS. However, it remains the Government's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies when Orders have been made under section 109 of the Localism Act 2011, and weight can be attached to this intention.
8. The RSS sets out the region's housing provision and the priorities in economic development, retail growth, transport investment, the environment, minerals and waste

treatment and disposal. Some policies have an end date of 2021 but the overall vision, strategy, and general policies will guide development over a longer timescale. The following policies are considered relevant:

9. *Policy 2 (Sustainable development)* requires new development proposals to meet the aim of promoting sustainable patterns of development.
10. *Policy 24 (Delivering Sustainable Communities)* sets out criteria for the assessment of land suitability of development having regard to locational factors and sustainability.
11. *Policy 27 (Out-of-Centre Leisure Developments)* states that new out-of-centre leisure developments need to be considered and justified through the sequential approach and locational strategy to ensure developments are of an appropriate scale in relation to nearby settlements, and should not make provision for new out-of-centre leisure developments unless there are demonstrable benefits that would contribute to the sustainable growth of the local economy.

#### **LOCAL PLAN POLICY:**

12. *Policy IB1 (Type of Industry and Business Areas)* states that the Council will normally approved development that maintain in appropriate locations a range of land available for industry and business.
13. *Policy IB2 (Designation of Type of Industrial Estate)* designates existing industrial estates as prestige business parks, general industrial areas or local industrial areas.
14. *Policy IB6 (Acceptable Uses in General Industrial Areas)* sets out that business, general industry and warehousing uses will normally be permitted in designated industrial areas, and that large food retail units will normally be refused, having regard to the purpose of the industrial area as set out under Policy IB1.
15. *Policy S1 (Promotion and Protection of the Role of Town Centres)* states that the role of the boroughs main town centres in Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Ferryhill and Shildon as district shopping centres will be promoted and protected and will provide the aim locations for major retail developments.
16. *Policy D1 (General Principles for the Layout and Design of New Developments)* sets out several key principles for the layout and design of new developments.
17. *Policy D2 (Design for People)* requires developments to take account of personal safety and security of property, access needs of users and provision of appropriate facilities such as toilets, baby changing facilities, public seating etc.
18. *Policy D3 (Designed with pedestrians, cyclists, public transport)* aims to ensure that new developments are accessible and safe for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, cars and other vehicles.
19. A number of other documents at a local level are considered relevant to the consideration of the proposals, and these include: County Durham Plan, Core

Strategy Issues and Options (2010); Core Strategy Policy Direction (2011); and, Durham Employment Land Review (2011).

*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at (<http://www2.sedgefield.gov.uk/planning/SBCindex.htm>)*

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## **CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES**

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### **STATUTORY RESPONSES:**

20. *Shildon Town Council* has no objections to the proposal.
21. *The Highway Authority* advises that the 53 car parking spaces proposed would be an acceptable level of on-site car parking provision to support the six proposed pitches and the full time equivalent staff that would be employed at the facility. In addition, it is noted that the site is relatively well served by public transport with bus stops on the C189 Redworth Road, some 250m from the site. No objection is raised to the proposals.

### **INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:**

22. *The Planning Policy Section* did not object to the principle of the development at the pre-application stage or the approval of a similar scheme recently, in Newton Aycliffe. It is noted that a sequential test that has been carried out identifying that no other alternative buildings / sites are currently available to meet the functional requirements of this particular proposal. Regarding local economy and health benefits the proposal would provide a service which appears to be poorly represented elsewhere across the town therefore potential benefits from the scheme are significant and similar town centre enterprises would not be impacted.

### **PUBLIC RESPONSES:**

23. The application has been advertised by way of both press and site notices and by letter to surrounding industrial units. Three letters of objection have been received.
24. Paul Mulley, Chairman to Shildon AFC Supporters Club advises that the Scouts Memorial Field provides a playing field for the children of Shildon. A second similar scheme could impact on the one already in use. This could lead to a loss of tenants and loss of income.
25. Mrs L M Rowley, Hon. Secretary to the Trustees of the Shildon Scout Memorial Field advise that children already have the option of joining a number of local football clubs, and 5 a side facilities are already provided at numerous other sites in the area. The lack of footpaths in the area is highlighted and that accessing the development would be unsafe for pedestrians.
26. David Dent, Director of Shildon AFC Development Centre states that the development is a town centre use, and would be contrary to PPS4. The development will undermine

Shildon AFC Development Facility which currently has 80 children and is a cornerstone of the community. The development will impact on the vitality and viability of Shildon Town Centre. Access will be by car, and the choice of location is purely based on cost grounds.

**APPLICANTS STATEMENT:**

27. The planning application for the Soccer Centre at the George Reynolds Industrial Estate, Shildon, is the culmination of a 5 year project seeking to establish a quality facility in south-west Durham, promoted by well-established local businessmen who have a direct interest in and a commitment to the area, demonstrated by the substantial financial commitments they have already made. Prior to this application, they had identified suitable sites at Crook and Bishop Auckland but were not able to secure the premises, despite having already received planning permission for the Crook site. Thus they have already shown their commitment over a period of time, and importantly they have shown, from the locations identified, that they are not simply focusing on indoor football provision in one town, in this case Shildon, but provision for south-west Durham, and even a little beyond. At present, there is no facility in the south-west Durham area to the standard being proposed at Shildon, the nearest alternative being Soccerena at Durham, to which players and teams currently travel from places such as Stanhope and Barnard Castle, as well as Teesside.
28. It has been disappointing, therefore, to have learned of objections to the application made on what are felt to be parochial and protectionist grounds from organisations within Shildon itself, which see the proposal being in some way in competition with them rather than, as the applicant intends, complementary to these organisations. Indeed it is the hope of the applicant that football organisations in Shildon, including Shildon AFC, would make use of the high quality indoor football facilities, particularly during the winter months. The objections made strongly suggest that the proposed indoor facility, which will be surfaced with 3G (third generation) artificial grass, will undermine the good work carried out in Shildon in football development, but on the contrary, the proposal is intended to bring a high quality facility which is not threatened by inclement weather to various age groups of either gender, and it is to a standard which is above anything else on offer in the south-west Durham area. As an example of the variety of users, one club, Bishop Auckland St Marys, wish to use the proposed centre. This club has 18 boys teams, but also it has St Marys Angels, which has gone from one girls' team to now 4 teams, and increasing to 5 next season. These girls need a proper facility to cater for their needs in being able to play and train in high quality surroundings.
29. The applicant and his partners in this project have received a substantial number of letters and statements of support from players, clubs and organisations who believe in this project and the need for a high quality facility, and this support can be readily identified to Members of the Committee should they wish, and the geographical area they cover can be appreciated. At the other end of the spectrum, perhaps, are the initiatives coming from the Football Association, the Premier League and Football League to improve the standard of coaching and facilities nationwide, with, at the top end, the Elite Player Performance Plan starting in season 2012-13, which will seek to produce more home-grown players in the professional game. Such initiatives have a trickle down effect to all levels of the game, in that higher standards are promoted

down to grassroots level. This project is considered as a distinct asset towards promoting the high quality being sought by the football organisations. However, as a further linkage into the local communities, it is also intended that the soccer centre will develop links with schools and that the facility will be used by schools free of charge during the day when demand will be lower.

30. It is recognised that in the objections made to the application, there are issues raised which are of a genuine planning nature. Some of these suggest that a site which was intended for employment use should not accommodate a leisure facility, whilst it is also suggested that a sequential assessment should have been prepared regarding impact on the town centre of Shildon. In the latter case, that assessment was prepared and submitted, whilst it has also been recognised in the Council's own evidence gathering that given the overprovision of employment floorspace in the area, there would be no justification for denying permission on this basis. Indeed, since the submission of the application, new planning guidance has been issued by the Government in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and this would support the comments made above on the reuse of employment floorspace, as this is a contributory factor to what is to be regarded as sustainable development. NPPF has also abolished PPS4 under which sequential assessments were required, but nevertheless the assessment undertaken concludes that the proposed site is appropriate. The new policy guidance explains that planning has economic, social and environmental roles, all of which are mutually dependent, and pursuing sustainable development includes improving conditions for leisure, which in turn reflects the goal in the document of promoting healthy communities. Overall, the aims and objectives of NPPF are seen as supportive of this application.
31. One practical point raised in objections to the application concerns the existing footpath links to the application site and how these could be improved. The applicant acknowledges this point, as it is part of the connectivity/ sustainability issues relating to the development. Although this matter has not been raised by the highways officer in his consultation response, should provision of a further footpath link be something which is felt to be desirable, the applicant would confirm to the Committee that a suitably worded condition could be appropriately attached to the permission should the Committee be inclined to grant permission. A similar requirement for the provision of bike racks at the application site would also be regarded as acceptable and appropriate.
32. This is a facility which is intended for the wider community of south-west Durham. It is intended to start in providing 3 full time and 6 part time jobs, but as it becomes more successful the numbers would rise to 10-12 jobs. It is a development which seeks to complement the current structure of soccer in the south-west Durham community and it is a soccer centre aimed at bringing better health, business and prosperity to the area, and getting children and adults into exercise, and out from in front of computers, play stations and televisions to enjoy exercise in a safe, friendly and high quality sports environment.

*The above represents a summary of the comments received on this application. The full written text is available for inspection on the application file.*

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## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT**

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33. Having regard to the requirements of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the relevant Development Plan policies, relevant guidance and all other material planning considerations, including representations received, it is considered that the main planning issues in this instance relate to the schemes compliance with the national planning policy framework in terms of sequential site assessment and wider town centre impacts and the loss of employment land that would result, the sites sustainability, and whether there would be detriment to highway safety or neighbouring land uses.

### Principle of development

34. As previously mentioned this planning application needs to be assessed against the provisions of the Development Plan and other 'material considerations'. In this instance, the Development Plan constitutes the Sedgefield Borough Council Local Plan and for the time being, the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East. Other material planning considerations include the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the practice guide accompanying the now replaced PPS4, Planning for Town Centres: Practice guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach.
35. Policy IB2(B) of the Local Plan identifies George Reynolds Industrial Estate as a general industrial estate. Local Plan Policy IB6 seeks to ensure that new development within George Reynolds Industrial Estate is within use classes B1, B2 and B8. The objective of general industrial estates is to support a wide range of industrial activities (B1, B2 and B8) and other activities are only generally permitted where they are clearly complementary to the main uses in terms of their size and functional relationship in providing a service to existing businesses and employees already on the estate. This proposal would result in the creation of a non Class B use within George Reynolds Industrial Estate, which has been designated in the Local Plan as a key employment area. The proposed leisure use is therefore a departure from the Local Plan.
36. However, more up-to-date development plan policy is contained within RSS, and Policy 27 in particular, which provides detailed criteria for the assessment of economic development proposals. It states that new out-of-centre leisure developments need to be considered and justified through the sequential approach and locational strategy to ensure developments are of an appropriate scale in relation to nearby settlements, and should not make provision for new out-of-centre leisure developments unless there are demonstrable benefits that would contribute to the sustainable growth of the local economy.
37. Such advice is reflected in the NPPFs approach to development in terms of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and moreover, that at a policy level in particular, the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment uses should be avoided where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose.

Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities. The draft Employment Land Review recognised that there was an oversupply of industrial land in the area, and advises that the undeveloped part of the George Reynolds Industrial Estate be de-allocated. This comprises around 45% of the industrial estate.

*Sequential assessment of other potential sites*

38. The NPPF states that leisure facilities, as proposed in this case, are town centre uses, and that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning application for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan .
39. A sequential test has been carried out by the applicant in support of this application with the catchment area being focused on sites near to Bishop Auckland, and where the applicants have previously sought to implement proposals for a soccer centre, but despite planning permission having been granted, have not come to fruition for reasons beyond the applicants control. In identifying the availability of the application site, the applicants have, in addition, given consideration to the availability of sites within Shildon town centre, however, in noting the tightly developed core of the town centre which is located very much to the north of the settlement, there are no opportunities for the development of a soccer centre as there are no vacant buildings of the scale required to accommodate the proposed use. In addition, it is highlighted that the town's main leisure attraction, Locomotion, is, like the application site, located towards the southern end of the settlement. The main focus of the sequential assessment has therefore been on in the town's industrial estates including Lambton Street Industrial Estate, Furnace Industrial Estate, Dabble Duck Industrial Estate, Hackworth Industrial Estate, Dale Road Industrial Estate, All Saints Industrial Estate, and George Reynolds Industrial Estate. In demonstrating flexibility in terms of scale and format, it is considered that with the exception of two sites within the George Reynolds Industrial Estate, there are no other large industrial units available that could accommodate the use proposed.
40. The NPPF also requires that in considering out of centre locations such as the application site, preference ought to be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. As highlighted above, the tightly developed town centre and its location on the northern edge of the settlement is such that good town centre connections are not easily achieved.
41. In these circumstances, it is considered that the sequential test undertaken has identified that there are no town centre or edge of town centre locations that could accommodate the proposed use, and similarly no other out of centre locations that would be more sequentially preferable, and accordingly the sequential test has been satisfied.

*The effect of this proposal on the viability and vitality of surrounding Town Centres*



42. Notwithstanding the conclusions reached above in respect of the sequential test, it is nonetheless considered that the preferred location for a development of this nature would be in a town centre where this would help support the range of existing retail and other town centre uses. Policy S1 of the Local Plan states that the role of the former boroughs main town centres, including Shildon, will be promoted and protected and that major retail and other town centre uses, such as the proposal, should be directed towards main town centres.
43. The NPPF requires that applications for main town centre uses that are not located within a centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan are accompanied by an impact assessment. Whilst no such assessment is provided with the application, it is considered that an assessment of the impacts can be made in line with NPPF criteria such that the scheme would not adversely impact investment in the town or its vitality and viability. In particular, it is of note that unlike out of town retailing which can undermine in centre trading, for example, the surrounding town centres do not currently offer a similar facility that this development would compete with. The closest facilities to this development are the Shildon Development Centre and the Sunnysdale Leisure Centre. The Shildon Development Centre focuses mainly on children's 5 a side and coaching whilst the Sunnysdale Leisure Centre does not provide the number of pitches that this application proposes.
44. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would be unlikely to have a demonstrable harmful effect on the vitality and viability of surrounding town centres that would justify refusal of the permission on these grounds. It is considered that the development would not pull trade from these town centres as the proposed users for this development would generally have to travel outside of the area to use a service such as this. It is therefore considered that in assessing the impacts of the development on surrounding town centre, that the scheme would not undermine their vitality and viability.
45. Across the county and further afield across the north east, these types of facilities are prevalent within industrial estates. Most recently a large 8,000sqm 5 a side development was approved on Newton Aycliffe Industrial Estate, "Soccarena" is located within the Dragonville Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Durham City, whilst "Soccer Sensations" is located within Bowesfield Industrial Estate outside of Stockton Town Centre and "Goals" is located on former railway sidings outside of Middlesbrough Town Centre.
46. Although this particular use is considered acceptable due to its specific circumstances, other uses within the D2 use class would not be considered acceptable. For this reason, a condition removing the permitted development rights for changes within the D2 use class is proposed in the event the application is approved. This will help to protect the vitality and viability of the town centre and will help with the broader regeneration aims of Durham County Council by removing the site owners ability to open such uses as a cinema, a bingo hall or skating rink outside of the town centre without specific justification.

## Sustainability

47. Compared to a town centre location this site is considered to perform poorly in sustainability terms, however, it is noted that the site is relatively close to bus services which could offer sustainable transport options to staff or visitors travelling to and from the premises, however, it is acknowledged that the users are likely to be heavily reliant on the private car, particularly on evenings and weekends when the facilities are likely to be most heavily used, and when such bus services are less frequent.
48. The Government is seeking to reduce the need to travel, reduce the number of car journeys and to encourage the use of public transport and reduce the reliance on private car use. It is also a key aim of the Government to facilitate multipurpose journeys and to ensure that everyone has access to a range of facilities.
49. George Reynolds Industrial Estate employs a large number of people and it is envisaged that the proposed use could provide a valuable service for the people employed in the area or living within walking distance or a short car journey from the site who would otherwise have to go into the town centre on a lunch time or after work to play 5 a side football. This development would therefore reduce the number of car journeys.

## Access and car parking

50. The application currently benefits from 20 car parking spaces and will provide an additional 33. The Highway Authority is satisfied that the existing road system can accommodate the anticipated traffic flows arising from a proposal of this type and that the proposed level of car parking provision is acceptable and as such, they raise no objection to the proposed use. The proposed development is therefore considered to fully accord with Policies D1 and D3 of the Local Plan.

## Impact on neighbouring properties

51. Given the commercial nature of the surrounding sites and the activities proposed as part of the development it is not considered that the proposed scheme would result in any significant impacts on the amenity of the neighbouring occupants so as to justify a refusal of the application.

## Objections

52. Three objections have been received from the local community. These objections mainly relate to the suitability of the development away from the town centre, the impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre and the impact the development would have on existing sporting facilities in the town, namely, the Shildon FC Development Centre and the Scouts Field football pitch.
53. The objections state that the opening up of the indoor 5 a side arena will take business away from their facilities which in the main provide football coaching for local children. The primary focus of the business will be groups of people organising weekly 5 a side games between themselves and weekly adult leagues. Children's football coaching will also be offered but this will mainly be in school holidays so will not be a

major part of the business model. In addition, the indoor nature of the facility will ensure its availability during winter months when outdoor pitches can't be used.

54. It is therefore considered that this development will bring something new to the area and will not directly compete with the existing uses within Shildon.

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## CONCLUSION

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55. Whilst a town centre or edge of centre site would have been the preferred location for this leisure development the applicant's sequential assessment has not identified any suitable, available or viable alternative sites that would be capable of meeting the applicant's requirements. It is, therefore, considered that this proposal accords with guidance provided in the NPPF in terms of seeking alternative uses for employment allocated sites that are vacant. It is however, recognised that the scheme would depart from Policies IB2 and IB6 of the Local Plan.

56. The proposal would provide a range of leisure facilities which are not currently available to residents within this area, whilst creating 3 full time and 6 part time jobs. The potential employment opportunities would, of course, be welcome in order to assist with the economic regeneration of the area. As such, and noting the NPPFs presumption in favour of sustainable development, approval of the application is recommended subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions.

57. Although the scheme departs from the development plan, the level of floorspace involved is such that having regard to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (Direction) England 2009, the application need not be referred to the Secretary of State.

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## RECOMMENDATION

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That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the following planning conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.*

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

1745 03A

1745 04

1745 05

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of good planning.*

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Uses Classes) Order 1987, (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modifications), the premises shall be used for an indoor football facility only and for no

other purpose, including any other activity within the same class of the schedule to that Order.

*Reason: In order to preserve the vitality and viability of Shildon town centre in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy S1 of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan.*

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## **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

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1. The proposed change of use to a five-a-side football facility is considered to be acceptable having regard to the sequentially preferable location of the site, the limited overall impact on other centres that would arise and the employment opportunities created by the development. As such the proposals are considered to comply with of Policies S1, D1, D2 and D3 of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan 1996 (which is a saved plan in accordance with the Secretary of States Direction under paragraph 1 (3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004), Policies 2, 24 and 27 of the North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021, and with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. In particular the development was considered acceptable having regard to the availability, suitability and viability of other alternative development opportunities within the identified catchment areas. Although a departure from Policies IB1, IB2 and IB6 of the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan on balance it is considered that the proposal represents an acceptable form of development due to the proven need to be situated in this location and to the employment benefits arising from this scheme which would involve the bringing back into use a vacant unit and would assist in the economic regeneration of the area.
3. Whilst it is noted that there are objections to the scheme on the basis of the introduction of a competing use to existing ones, this is not considered to be a reason for withholding planning permission for a development that is considered acceptable and where in any event, the specific nature of the proposed scheme is that it would not directly compete with existing sporting facilities.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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- Submitted Application Forms, Plans and sequential test
- Sedgefield Borough Local Plan 1996
- Regional Spatial Strategy
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Responses from Shildon Town Council and Highway Authority
- Public consultation responses