

Date: 05/06/2024

Barnsley Youth Activity Park – Justification for the Omission of the Clubhouse Café

Dear Jessica,

SITE: Land of Schwabisch Gmund Way, Barnsley, S71 1AY
DEVELOPMENT: Reserved Matters Application for a Proposed Activity Park
REF: 2024/0475/INVALID

Following our recent correspondence, it is evident that BMBC require justification for the omission of the clubhouse and café from the reserved matters application. Please see the below justification.

Introduction

The following presents the rationale for omitting the café and clubhouse from the reserved planning application relating to the hybrid planning application ref: 2022/0434. The initial outline permission was granted with all matters reserved except for means of access, encompassing the erection of a clubhouse café and the formation of the activity park. Following a comprehensive review and stakeholder engagement, several factors necessitate the exclusion of the café from the finalised application. These factors include limited market interest, availability of alternative food options, financial constraints, and strategic design modifications.

1. Limited Market Interest

A thorough soft market testing process was conducted to gauge interest in the proposed Youth Activity Park and associated facilities. This included a survey that garnered almost 400 responses. The results indicated a muted interest in the clubhouse café concept. The Locke Park Café and children's play area was frequently referred to, but this is a very different offering for a younger demographic and accompanying parent / carer. This limited interest suggests that the café would not attract sufficient patronage to ensure its viability. The survey data highlights that potential users do not see a significant benefit in the inclusion of a café within the activity park, thereby undermining the foundational premise of its necessity.

2. Availability of Alternative Food Options

The recent development of a new town centre in close proximity to the proposed site, and easily accessed via the interchange or the new pedestrian rail bridge, offers a variety of food and beverage options. This development includes multiple cafés, restaurants, and eateries that cater to a broad spectrum of culinary preferences and budgets. The presence of these facilities diminishes the need for an additional café within the activity park. The existing town centre amenities are more than adequate to meet the needs of visitors, providing both convenience and variety.

3. Subsidised Eating Options at Barnsley Youth Zone (BYZ)

Adjacent to the proposed activity park is the Barnsley Youth Zone (BYZ), which has developed low-cost and subsidised eating options. These facilities are designed to support the nutritional needs of young

people and their families at affordable prices. The provision of subsidised food options at BYZ further reduces the demand for a separate café within the activity park. The proximity and affordability of these options offer a compelling alternative to the proposed café, making it redundant in terms of community service and resource allocation.

4. Financial Constraints

LUF2 funding secured only considers capital and not revenue and so minimising revenue burden and lifecycle costs are key to the projects success. LUF2 funding was secured prior to high levels of inflation seen at the start of 2022 and as a result, to keep the scheme viable there has been a need to revisit the outline permission and scope of this. There are currently no internal revenue related budgets allocated for the ownership and maintenance of new buildings, including the proposed clubhouse café. The financial implications of constructing, outfitting, and operating the café are substantial. Given the absence of earmarked funds, proceeding with the café would necessitate diverting resources from other essential projects or seeking additional funding sources, neither of which are feasible at this time.

5. Strategic Design Adaptations

In response to these challenges and to better meet the needs of the community, the design of the activity park has been adapted to include a new plaza. This plaza is intended to be a flexible space capable of hosting pop-up venues and drive-on vendors. This design adaptation allows for a dynamic and versatile use of space, offering a variety of food and beverage options through temporary and seasonal vendors. This approach not only addresses the need for food services but does so in a more sustainable and adaptable manner.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the decision to omit the café and clubhouse from the reserved planning application is based on a combination of pragmatic and strategic considerations. The limited interest from potential users and operators, the availability of alternative food options in the vicinity, financial constraints, and the innovative design of a versatile plaza collectively support this decision. The adapted design with pop-up venues and drive-on vendors will provide greater flexibility and better serve the needs of the community. We believe this approach will enhance the overall appeal and functionality of the activity park, ensuring its success and sustainability.

It is our considered opinion that the exclusion of the clubhouse and café would not present a scenario where the reserved matters application would be a significant departure from the outline consent. We respectfully request that the application is validated and progressed in light of the information contained within this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Jay Saggerson
Senior Urbanist