

DARLINGTON SPORTS VILLAGE

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Stephen Harker
Leader and Efficiency and Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director - Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet of progress on Darlington Mowden Park's (DMP) proposal for a Darlington Sports Village (DSV), previously outlined at December 2017 Cabinet, and to seek agreement to the ongoing approach to taking this project forward.

Summary

2. DMP, owners of the arena, approached the Council last year with a request to work collaboratively on a proposal for the Arena, the 23 acres owned by DMP and up to 42 acres of adjacent Council land.
3. In essence the proposal is to create a multiuser communal sports village (DSV) that will have an improved arena as a centrepiece asset with artificial pitches and reconfigured concourse for events, together with a centre of excellence for sports development and additional sports and leisure uses, accompanied by on site Hotel, Petrol Garage Station, and some food convenience shopping.
4. The proposal, while it has significant risks, has real merit and holds out the possibility of enabling the arena to have a long term sustainable future and attract additional facilities for sport and leisure serving Darlington and the surrounding areas.
5. Good progress has been made by DMP in eliciting interest from end users. A Hotel operator, garage and several sports clubs have signalled intend to commit to locate at DSV. Business planning and technical assessments are underway and it is hoped that a planning submission will be made in due course (most likely after Summer 2019) when full feasibility and technical work is completed and viability assessment made.

6. However, whilst Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) has agreed to fund this feasibility and business planning work with a £0.450m grant, the agreement to draw this down has taken longer than anticipated and was only approved recently leading to delays in DMP commissioning the necessary works and studies. Detailed work on the DSV is now expected to accelerate.
7. Alongside its goal of seeing good sports provision in Darlington, Members will no doubt recall that the Council has an important interest in the arena site as it enables access to adjacent 42 acres of Council land. Regardless therefore as to whether this DSV proposal goes ahead it was always important that the Council protects its position on future access to Council adjacent land. This was an important backdrop to the December 17 Cabinet agreement.
8. The Council previously negotiated and agreed a position where it will have a guaranteed right to step in and acquire the freehold of the Arena and DMP land in certain scenarios. Given delays in formalising the plan we have been asked to revisit the Council's position on the original guarantee. The details of this further request are set out in the report within Part III of the Cabinet agenda.
9. We intend to bring further reports on this DSV business plan and any next steps to a future Cabinet.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that Cabinet:-
 - (a) Notes the progress made to date, acknowledging some delays to the programme timetable;
 - (b) Agrees to the principles and financial commitments as articulated in **Appendix 1**;
 - (c) Notes that the detailed business plan for the DSV will be brought to Cabinet to consider further approvals needed.

Reasons

11. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
 - (a) To allow additional time to carry out detailed work on the creation of sustainable community sports facilities in Darlington;
 - (b) To seek to achieve significant economic regeneration including employment opportunities;
 - (c) To provide guarantee and security of access to adjacent Council land in the future.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	There are no Health and Well Being Issues
Carbon Impact	There are no sustainability issues
Diversity	There are no diversity issues
Wards Affected	Eastbourne
Groups Affected	Not Applicable
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There are no issues adversely affecting the Community Strategy
Efficiency	There are no impacts on efficiency
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

12. Since purchasing the Arena in 2012 DMP have gone through a substantial transition becoming increasingly successful as a club and as the operator of the Arena site. The DMP Women's team is now in the Premiership, the DMP Men's team is currently in a good position of the third tier of the national rugby leagues with the ambition of gaining promotion to the Rugby Championship in future. More than 25 grass-root rugby teams are based at the Arena site. There is also a growing array of other sports clubs, schools and leisure stakeholders using the Arena site on a weekly basis. As part of the Arena's longer term sustainability DMP have proposed the establishment of DSV that utilises DMP land and some Council land. There are now a number of examples across the country where neighbouring land is utilised to create multi-sport community facilities more often than not with the infrastructure underpinned by mixed use development.

Proposal

13. The proposed DSV is to be a collaboration between the Council and DMP and potentially others to create a sports village that will have an improved arena as a centrepiece asset with artificial pitches and reconfigured concourse for events, together with a centre of excellence for sports, a new sports and leisure activity along with some commercial uses.

14. Subject to a satisfactory and verified business plan the DSV will be formed with a joint venture between the Council and incorporating both the arena site and adjoining land and the Council's 41.8 acres shown on **Appendix 2**.

Financial Implications

15. Set out in the confidential Part III report (attached Appendix 1).

Legal Implications

16. Set out in the confidential Part III report (attached Appendix 1).

Consultation

17. Consultation will take place to establish the viability of the DSV as part of the business plan process.