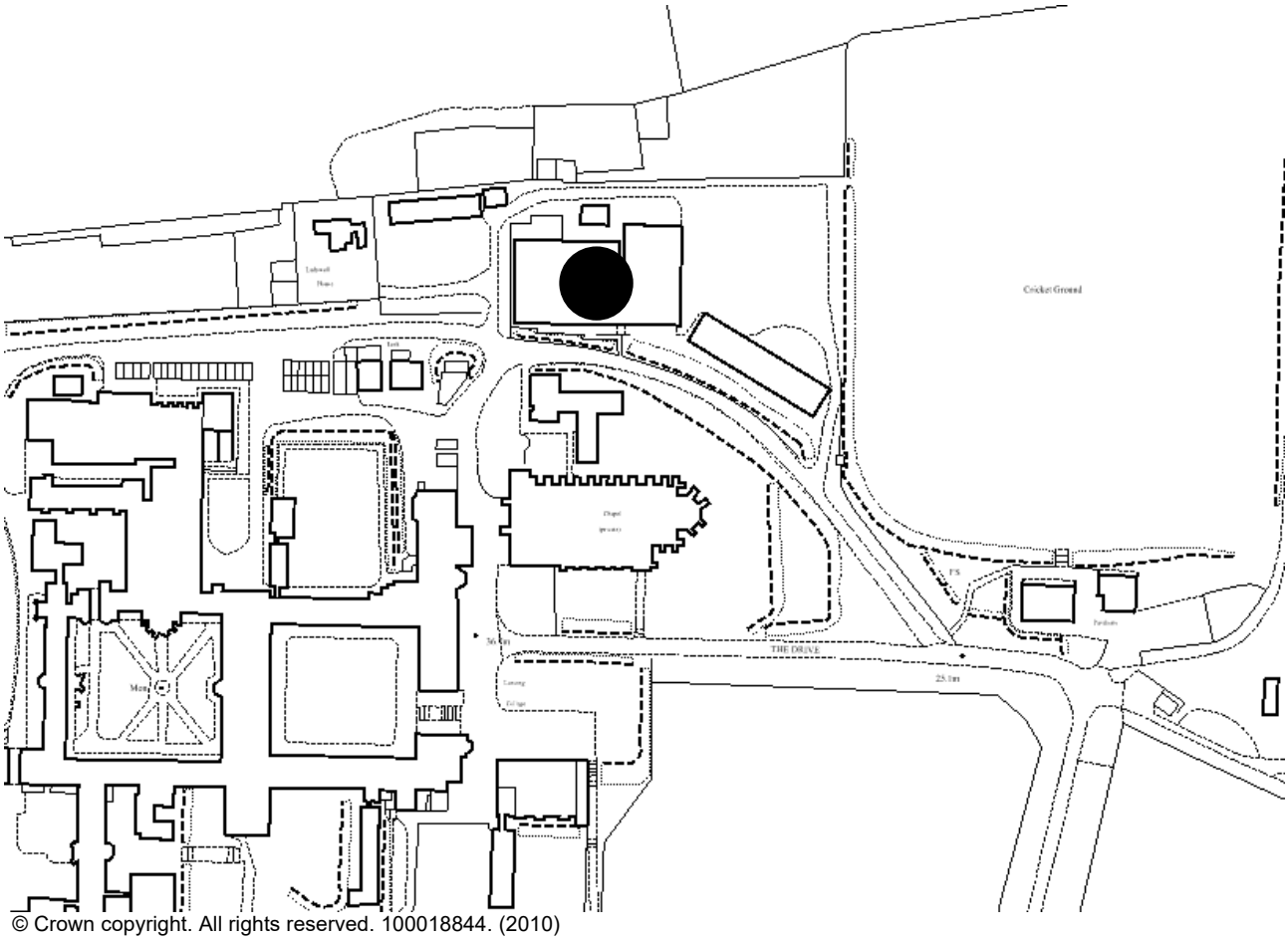
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Application Number: ADC/0496/10 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: **Lancing College, Lancing BN15 0RN**

Proposal: **Demolition of existing sports and pool buildings and erection of new sports building to include an indoor multi-purpose sports hall and a 6-lane indoor swimming pool, including additional landscaping and mitigation works and alterations to parking layout**



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The Application

The application relates to the swimming pool and sports hall at Lancing College, which are located to the north of the Grade I Listed Chapel. It is proposed to demolish the existing buildings, including a portable building to the north of the pool building, and to construct a large new sports hall and 6-lane swimming pool for the College. The whole site lies within the South Downs National Park.

The existing sports hall (L/224/74) is a modern portal-framed building with metal cladding which, together with the swimming pool building (L/133/80), lies at a lower level than the Chapel with a line of trees on the southern, eastern and northern sides of the site. A single-storey rifle range building lies to the south east of the existing buildings and this is to remain. Existing car parking to

the east of the sports hall is to be reconfigured and rationalised, but with no reduction in the number of spaces.

A pair of two-storey buildings containing domestic staff quarters lie to the north west of the site, at a higher level. There is a field directly to the north of the site, within the College grounds, which drops away to the north and east with views across the valley towards Applesham Farm, partly obscured by trees. The College cricket pitch lies directly to the east, with the music school and Chapel on higher ground to the south.

The proposal involves the demolition of the existing buildings and their replacement with a single, modern building with an undulating sedum roof and oak cladding. The building will comprise a 25m x 13m swimming pool at its eastern end with a multi-purpose sports hall at the western end, comprising 8 courts and changing facilities at ground floor with a fitness room, dance studio and a small café centrally positioned at first floor. Classrooms will also be provided on both floors. The roof will rise to 11m at its highest point where it sits above the sports hall, with the roof overhang dropping to just 3m above ground level at its eastern end. The building will be 72m long. The ground level will be excavated to reduce its perceived height and impact, particularly towards the western end of the building and it will be approximately 1m higher than the height of the existing sports hall but the same height above ground as the pool building.

The application is supported by a Planning Statement, Design & Access Statement, Heritage Statement, Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, Ecology and Protected Species Appraisal and Arboricultural Assessment. A request for a Screening Opinion under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations was also submitted. It has been determined that the application does not require an EIA.

Consultations and Representations

South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA): No objection subject to conditions requiring a long-term landscaping plan, a maintenance agreement relating to the sedum roof, controls on the use of external lighting and details of the means of heating and ventilation to be submitted and approved . They would also wish to see that any measures recommended in respect of bats are included.
The SDNPA accept that the existing sports hall and, to a lesser extent, the swimming pool building, detract from the setting of the grade I listed Chapel, which is set in a prominent position above the Adur valley. They consider the proposed replacement building to be a suitable solution that meets the internal requirements for a sports hall and swimming pool, whilst minimising the bulk and massing and using natural external materials and a curving sedum roof to help blend into the Downland setting. They are concerned that a renewable/sustainable heat source has not been incorporated into the proposals, but notes that the proposed building would be constructed to a higher standard of energy efficiency than the existing buildings. They therefore recommend that, if Adur District Council approves this application, it includes a condition requiring the means of heating and ventilation to be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of the works. Furthermore they would welcome future discussions regarding the inclusion of renewable/sustainable energy provision for the College when the Management Plan for the College is next reviewed.

English Heritage: Consider that this is a striking proposal for a site which could hardly be closer to the Grade 1 listed Chapel, which is one of the great masterpieces of nineteenth-century English architecture, therefore the setting is very important. Fortunately, the Chapel is so huge that any building which invited direct comparison in scale would be automatically objectionable. It also has a very different aspect to the north from that to the south and east. The north side is less public, and does not allow direct comparison with the other original buildings to the same extent as the famous open views.
The footprint proposed is very large, significantly exceeding the current building, but it would be

designed to lie down in the landscape and its walls would be deeply shadowed. Even if the green roof were to fail and all the trees to the north were to die - remote possibilities it is hoped - this formal cunning would serve it well. Providing these design qualities are maintained in the execution they believe this proposal is acceptable.

West Sussex County Council: The Conservation Architect has no objection. He states that the design is a clear reflection of the solution discussed with the architects. It is a low-lying structure with an extensive sedum roof which will have a minimal impact on the important east elevation of the college. The rough-sawn oak side panelling will help to blend it into the landscaping. The design will have a minimal impact on the adjoining Grade 1 listed chapel and will be better than the existing sports hall. It is suggested that the roof covering be required by condition.

The Transport Planning Officer has no objection. The proposal is for improvement and modernisation of the existing facilities and, while there is an expansion of the area covered by the proposal, only modest increases in visitor numbers and parking requirements are anticipated. The applicant proposes to maintain the number of parking spaces at 56. There is ample area available for these spaces at present and it is not anticipated that any issues would arise with traffic circulation in the new car park layout.
The Ecologist has no objection. The Landscape Officer has no objection but suggests a grass roof that could be rough cut annually instead of the proposed sedum roof
The Archaeologist states that the proposal should have no significant archaeological implications. There are no previously reported ancient archaeological sites or finds within or immediately adjacent to the proposed new sports building. In respect of currently unknown buried archaeological sites, any such are likely to have been adversely affected to some degree during previous construction and landscaping works associated with the building of the present buildings and laying out of the existing car parking area.

Adur District Council: The Environmental Health Officer has no adverse comments

Environment Agency: They have no objection subject to conditions requiring an assessment and, if necessary, remediation of any potential contamination on the site

Natural England*:* No objection. Comment that there are unlikely to be implications for the Adur Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). They welcome the submission of an Ecology Report which advises that the proposals have the potential to affect species protected under European or UK legislation. They draw the Council's attention to their protected species standing advice, which provides guidance on when protected species may be impacted by a proposal. The application may provide opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats or the installation of bird nest boxes. The Council should consider securing measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site in accordance with Paragraph 14 of PPS9.

Adur District Conservation Advisory Group: No objection, commenting that the proposal is a commendable, innovative design.

Lancing Parish Council: No objections although the new facility would have been better located at the Boundstone Academy complex which would have provided better access for residents.

Third Parties: The South Downs Society do not object but ask that a condition of any permission be that additional planting of some semi-mature trees amongst any mass planting for screening purposes is carried out. They also ask that the materials used should be of a high quality and be suitable for a structure located within the South Downs National Park.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

The South East Plan 2006-2026 (GOSE 2009): SCT1, NRM5, C2, C3, B6
Adur District Local Plan (1996): AG1, AC1, AC2, AC3, AB11, AB27, ACS2
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005) and the supplement to PPS1 "Planning and Climate Change" (DCLG 2007)
PPS5 'Planning for the Historic Environment' (DCLG 2010)
PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' (ODPM 2004)
PPS9 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' (ODPM 2005)
PPS22 'Renewable Energy' (ODPM 2004)

Planning Assessment

Policies

The South East Plan sets out the long term spatial planning framework for the region with the aim of achieving more sustainable development, protecting the environment and combating climate change. Policy NRM5 seeks to avoid a net loss of biodiversity and to avoid damage to nationally important sites of special scientific interest. C3 refers to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and states that high priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in what is now the National Park. BE6 seeks the protection, conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of the historic environment and requires that the region's internationally and nationally designated historic assets should receive the highest level of protection. SCT1 gives priority to pro-actively pursuing sustainable economic growth and regeneration of the Sussex Coast whilst also protecting and enhancing its high environmental quality, its cultural and historic assets and promoting excellence in design of new developments in recognition of their importance to economic success and quality of life. NB. the Secretary of State has issued a Ministerial Statement that the Government's intention to revoke the Regional Plans is a material planning consideration (and a recent challenge to this in the High Court was lost).

Local Plan policy AC1 seeks to protect the countryside for its own sake from development which does not need a countryside location. Any development will need to be of a particularly high standard of design, must be in keeping with the locality and sited so as to minimise noise disturbance and visual intrusion. AC2 states that only in compelling circumstances will development be permitted within the AONB (now the National Park) and AC3 states that any development within it should conserve and enhance the landscape character of the area and have particular regard to the characteristic sculptured landform and appearance and the setting of important historical and natural features. New development should be sympathetic to traditional forms, materials and detailing of buildings and enclosures. The removal of buildings and features which are detrimental to landscape quality will be encouraged.

AB11 states that where new development is located within the setting of a Listed Building, the LPA will require that the design and materials do not adversely affect the setting. New development which would adversely affect the setting of a Listed Building will not be permitted.

ACS2 is a site specific policy relating to Lancing College which, notwithstanding the above countryside policies, states that the LPA will permit development essential to the needs of this important educational establishment subject to a number of criteria. These require that any development conforms with the provisions of the Lancing College Educational Development Strategy in order to ensure an integrated approach to development in this sensitive landscape. Development should consist of the re-use of buildings or to site new development on land previously occupied by outworn buildings or those of no architectural merit, to enhance the visual quality of the environment. Development should have regard to the need to protect and enhance views of the College's principal buildings, so as to maintain them as the dominant visual feature in the landscape and to minimising the visual impact of new development on the surrounding countryside and the high quality of the rural landscape.

The College has, in accordance with Policy ACS2, provided a Development Strategy for 2001-2014. The provision of improved sports facilities, including a properly equipped fitness room and the refurbishment of the squash courts, is highlighted as a particular aim. This was envisaged to take the form of an extension to the sports hall but the current proposal for the replacement of the existing unsightly buildings is considered to be a more efficient and desirable approach.

Government policy in PPS1 promotes high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted. It promotes the protection and enhancement of the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole. A high level of protection should be given to the most valued townscapes and landscapes. Sustainable development is encouraged as is the promotion of a more efficient use of land through higher density, mixed use developments and the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings.

PPS5 states that the Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. The objectives are to conserve England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance by ensuring, amongst other things, that decisions are based on the nature, extent and level of that significance, investigated to a degree proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset, and that the positive contribution of such heritage assets to local character and sense of place is recognised and valued.
Policy HE7.2 states *"In considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, LPAs should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations – this understanding should be used by the LPA to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposals".*
HE7.5 states *"LPAs should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment – the consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use".*
HE9.1 states *"There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation.....significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting".*

PPS7 states that "*new building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled; the Government's overall aim is protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all".* National Parks have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty, which should be given great weight in planning decisions, together with conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage, but suitably located and designed development necessary to facilitate economic and social wellbeing should also be provided for in planning policies for these areas. Major developments should not take place in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and, because of the serious impact they may have on these areas of natural beauty and the recreational opportunities they provide, major developments should be subject to the most rigorous examination and should demonstrate that they are in the public interest before being allowed to proceed and should be carried out to high environmental standards.

PPS9 seeks to conserve and enhance biological diversity, ensuring that protected species are protected from the adverse effects of development.
The supplement to PPS1 recognises the urgent need for action on climate change. Both PPS1 and PPS22 state that the wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material planning considerations that should

be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission. The delivery of sustainable buildings should be supported and encouraged where there are clear opportunities for significant use of decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy.

Design, character and appearance

The design of the building has undergone much revision since a replacement sports hall was first considered at pre-application stage in 2008. Initial sketches showed a much larger and taller building which would have been likely to have had a greater visual impact than the existing building, affecting the setting of the Grade 1 listed Chapel.

Following several design changes, the current proposal has evolved, taking much closer account of the site characteristics and the constraints caused by the visibility of the site and its setting.

The submitted plans show a building which is not in character with the form of existing College buildings. However, the existing sports hall and pool building are also out of character with other buildings at the College. The proposal is for a large building, as necessitated by its use as a sports hall, but the design attempts to minimise its impact with the use of the curved roof with overhanging eaves and sedum surface to avoid the harsh, industrial nature of the current building. The building is to be clad in vertical sawn oak overlapping panels which will gradually weather naturally to a silver grey finish. Windows will be aluminium framed with deep reveals, and partially shaded by the overhanging eaves, to reduce the risk of reflective glare.

The north side of the building will contain the 'functional' aspects of the hall, such as escape stairs, and will present the longest and largest visible elevation. Its impact will be softened to some extent by proposed planting of 'heavy standard' trees within the field to the north. The roof will contain a raised lantern to light the foyer below as well as 7 smaller circular rooflights and a flue. The lantern and flue will sit below the highest part of the roof and will not break its overall curved appearance.

The building will be accessed from the south via a new bridge from the road which runs between the site and the music school. The bridge will be supported by an oak frame on a brick plinth and will be 4m above ground level at its highest point. The decking on the bridge will be constructed of oak boards with stainless steel railings. It will have a width of 5.5m at the 'land' side narrowing to 4m at the building entrance. It will provide a level access to the first floor of the sports hall in compliance with Disabled Access requirements. Access will also be available from the car park via a set of brick new steps which will cut into the bank between the hall and the rifle range. The building will be built into the ground at its western end and will include an underground store, partly utilising the existing pool excavations. Retaining walls will be constructed adjacent to the bank on the south side.

It is considered that the building, while not relating in any way to the form or character of existing College buildings, is a successful design solution which represents a significant visual improvement over the existing 'industrial' form of the existing hall and pool buildings.

Impact on landscape character

The applicant's 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment" describes how the Chapel stands on top of a spur of downland extending eastwards from Lancing Hill. The land slopes down from the Chapel to the north and east and the application site is cut into the slope, the south west corner being some 3m below ground level. There are belts of trees and woodland around the College grounds, to the north, south and east, while the site itself is also largely surrounded by trees.

The existing building has a utilitarian, industrial appearance, being constructed largely of corrugated steel. It does little to enhance the setting of the chapel when viewed from the north or the wider landscape and its removal is considered to be desirable. While there is a line of poplars and limes on the edge of the car park to the east of the sports hall, when the trees are not in leaf the metal roof and cladding of the sports hall reflect light and are clearly visible in distant views such as from Mill Hill and the A27 flyover. Existing floodlights add to the visual intrusion and these will be replaced with more directional lighting, details of which can be controlled by condition.

The new building would remove the incongruous reflective metal and angular appearance of the existing buildings with a more organic building with curved sedum roof and wooden cladding. To further reduce its impact in the landscape, it will built into the ground as much as practicable given the slope of the site. Additional tree planting will enhance the existing screen.

A number of photomontages have been produced which attempt to show the visual impact of the proposed new building. While they are not particularly clear images, some of the closer views do show a less intrusive built form with a more 'natural' appearance.

The curve of the sedum roof is such that it will drop down almost to ground level at the eastern end of the building, with a large overhang, to minimise views of the walls of the building. This is in contrast to the stark, metallic walls of the existing building which rise up to a height of 9m and are very prominent. The new building will project further north by between 9-13m and will be brought further east by 12m. However, the visual impact of the increase in footprint is mitigated by the design approach. The oak cladding will weather to a grey colour and it is hoped that the building will blend in to some extent with the existing vegetation. The roof would change colour with the seasons and has the lowest maintenance requirements of all green roofs. The form of the roof has taken cues from the undulations of the South Downs while the oak cladding and curved roof are reflective of the 'Gridshell' at the Weald and Downland Museum.

From the east, the roof of the building will be lower than the existing building and overall the roof will be no higher than the highest point of the existing roof, as a result of it being set into the ground. From the north, the elevation will be higher but the increased mass of the building at this point would be softened by the oak cladding and sedum roof. The applicant's Landscape Assessment concludes that "it would be indiscernible in distant views and much less noticeable in local views."

It will be particularly important that the final details of the materials and finishes of the building are agreed prior to any construction commencing on site. However, it is considered that the form and design of the building will have an acceptable impact within the South Downs National Park.

Impact on setting of listed Chapel

The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment states that the site lies within Landscape Character Area G3 where the Gothic chapel of Lancing College is a particularly distinctive landmark. The maintenance of views of the chapel and its open setting is seen as a specific consideration.

The existing sports hall building has a poor quality appearance but, because it is cut into the ground and is shielded by the bank to the south, it does not compete with views of the chapel from the south and as one approaches along the College drive. Nevertheless, the removal of the existing unsightly buildings and their replacement with the building now proposed is considered to have significant benefit in terms of the wider landscape and the setting of the chapel. The sheer scale and magnificence of the chapel does naturally draw the eye and the proposed building, while a striking form in its own right, will not compete in important views of the listed landmark.

The applicants have submitted a Heritage Statement which goes into some detail to justify their proposal, with an assessment of its impact upon the setting of the chapel. The proposed building will be a positive enhancement of the setting of the chapel and will remove a building that currently detracts from its setting. The applicants have also provided sufficient design detail of elements such as the access bridge, eaves, roof perforations, ventilation grilles and window openings to enable a full assessment of the impact to be made. Samples of external materials are expected to be available at the Committee meeting.

Effect on trees & landscaping

The application proposes to retain as many of the existing trees as possible, many of which sit within the steep bank which was created when the existing building was constructed. Four trees are to be felled which sit within, or close to, the footprint of the proposed building. These are on the north side of the building predominantly and do not include any trees within the southern bank. The loss of the trees is not considered to result in an adverse visual impact. A scheme of new and replacement planting is proposed to reinforce existing screening, in conjunction with an overall landscape management plan for the site, the full details of which (including plans for the maintenance of the roof) can be reserved by condition.

Ecology

The ecological survey found evidence that the south side of the swimming pool building is used as a maternity roost for pipistrelle bats, a protected species. Full mitigation has been designed into the new building to include a full provision of replacement roosts by way of providing gaps in the cladding. A licence will be required from Natural England prior to demolition of the existing building but there is no reason to suspect that the development will cause any significant long-term ecological harm. Furthermore, the sedum roof will improve biodiversity on the site.

Access and Parking

The proposal involves the reconfiguration of the existing parking area at the eastern end of the site. There is currently an informal arrangement providing around 56 spaces. The proposed building will project 17m further east and will necessitate the marking out of a new car park layout. However, the revised layout will still enable the same amount of spaces to be provided, resulting in no net loss or gain of spaces.

The hall and pool are to be used primarily by college students only rather than the general public (with the exception of a number of local sports groups, as existing) and no increase in traffic is expected as a result of this development. The existing road around the site (providing a one-way in-and-out route) is to be maintained.

Sustainable Design and Construction

The building will be far more energy efficient than the outdated existing buildings. The building will be well insulated and will have a living roof, increasing natural surface area and reducing the risk of wasted water run-off from the roof. Timber cladding will be locally sourced.

As submitted, however, the building does not contain any specific renewable energy generating measures. Despite the absence of any specific Local Plan policy, Government guidance exists which encourages new buildings to be more sustainably constructed. The South Downs National Park Authority has expressed its disappointment that no renewable measures are included and has urged this matter to be addressed by the District Council. As such, a condition is proposed to be included requiring the College to explore the inclusion of some form of renewable energy provision within the building and to submit details for approval prior to construction.

In the long term the College have stated that they will be looking at ways of improving energy generation across the campus generally and this would be likely to feature in their next development strategy plan after 2014.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason:-

The proposed sports hall, replacing existing unsightly and outworn buildings, would enhance the setting of Lancing College Chapel, a grade 1 listed building, and not detract from the outstanding landscape quality of the South Downs National Park. It would consequently not conflict with the policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AC1, AC2, AC3, AB11, AB27, ACS2), the South East Plan (NRM5, C2, C3, BE6), PPS5 and PPS7

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Time limit for commencement) (amended to 5 years)
2. C8Bi (Parking spaces and access facilities related to building to be constructed and retained)
3. C11Aiv (Planting of trees and shrubs in accordance with approved Planting Strategy for Mitigation drawing no. 1045_PL_L03A date stamped received 9 February 2011) (amended)
4. C11Lii (Management scheme for landscaped areas, to include maintenance arrangements for proposed sedum roof) (amended)
5. The wildlife mitigation proposals and recommendations as specified in Section 5 of the approved Ecology and Protected Species Appraisal dated 17 December 2010 shall be fully implemented in accordance with the submitted details and implementation programme.
6. C12Aii (Samples of external materials for cladding, roof, windows, doors, bridge to be approved) (amended)
7. C14G3 (Details of any external lighting to be submitted and approved)
8. C18Ri (Full ground contamination investigation)
9. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced unless and until a strategy aimed at including renewable energy provision within the proposed building, including details of its construction, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
10. This permission relates to the following approved plans, all date stamped received 22 December 2010 except where indicated otherwise:-
    L (0) 02 A (1:7500 Scale Site Plan)
    L (0) 03 (Ordnance Survey Plan)
    L (0) 04 A (1:1000 Scale Site Plan)
    L (0) 05 (Block Plan)
    L (0) 06 (Plan of proposal with existing buildings shown)
    L (0) PK1 (Plan of existing car parking layout) date stamped received 7 February 2011
    L (0) PK2 (Plan of proposed car parking layout) date stamped received 7 February 2011
    P (0) 1 (First Floor Plan)
    P (0) 2A (Ground Floor Plan) date stamped received 14 February 2011
    P (0) 3A (Roof Plan)
    P (0) 30A (Section A-A looking North)
    P (0) 31A (Section A-A looking South)
    P (0) 32A (Section B-B looking East)
    P (0) 33A (Section B-B looking West)
    P (0) 40 Landscape Section view from East
    P (0) 41 Landscape Section view from North

P (0) 50 South Elevation
P (0) 51 West Elevation
P (0) 52 (North Elevation)
P (0) 53 (East Elevation)
P (0) 70 (Bat Mitigation Design South Elevation)
P (0) 71 (Bat Mitigation Design Details)
SK41 Typical Cladding Details
SK42 Openings in Cladding
SK43 Entrance bridge and reception lantern sections
SK44 Entrance bridge edge green oak detail
SK45 Entrance bridge plan
SK49 Design level sections South elevation
SK50 Design level sections West elevation
SK51 Design level sections North elevation
SK52 Gutter section details
SMW/LC/Sports hall/TS/001 (Tree Survey Plan)
SMW/LC/Sportshall/TPP/002/Revision 2 (Tree Protection Plan)
1045_PL_L03A (Planting Strategy for Mitigation) date stamped received 9 February 2011
SK61 Perspective sketch of the South elevation from S/W
11-02-03 Lancing SW colour perspective date stamped received 9 February 2011
11-02-03 Lancing NE colour perspective date stamped received 9 February 2011

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