DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tom Rea.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
18/00382/FP	Erection of single storey Wellness centre	Playing Fields Bury Lane Codicote Hertfordshire

Submitted Plan Nos

18/01/01 18/01/02A 18/01/03

1.0 Policies

LP2	Green Belt

LP55	Car Parking Standards
SECT7	Requiring Good Design
SECT8	Promoting Healthy Communities
SECT9	Promoting Green Belt Land

2.0 Site History

2.1 14/00176/1: Single storey sports hall and community centre following demolition of existing sports and social club. Granted 24.4.14

2.2 No other related planning history

3.0 Representations

3.1 **Codicote Parish Council:** Objection – application not valid as proper procedure has not been carried out (Certificate B – ownership). The Parish Council have not given their permission to proceed. Does not comply with the Parish Council's Green Belt policy. Access inadequate. Loss of car parking facilities. Lack of any proposed landscaping.

3.2 **Site Notice/Adjoining occupiers:** No representations received

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site and Surroundings

The John Clements Sports and Community Centre is located at the Bury Lane Playing fields located on the north east side of Codicote off Bury Lane. The site includes tennis courts, a playing field for cricket, football and other sports together with a sports and community building and a further pavilion. A large car park is located off the entrance drive into the site from Bury Lane. The whole of the site is within the Green Belt.

4.2 Proposal

The construction of a single storey detached building comprising 72 sqm located on the western edge of the exiting car park. The building would be 5.2m in overall height and would be designed with a pitched gabled roof and eternity blue / grey cladding. The building would be used as a Wellness centre for fitness assessment and rehabilitation of customers into exercise. The building will accommodate specialist equipment to monitor and measure levels of fitness.

The application is supported by two documents – a design and access statement and a memorandum explaining the objective of the Touchstone Well fitness centre.

The DAS explains that the Wellness Centre will be used for the assessment of individuals fitness condition and for the recommendation of remedial exercises / diets. It will also enable people to enjoy the facilities of the John Clements Sports and Community Centre.

The Touchstone Wellness memorandum explains that the use will help to open up the John Clements Sports and Community Centre for longer periods – seven days a week between 7.00am – 11.00pm - with the provision of indoor sports and activities. A 90 day programme is offered providing both active and inactive members of the community with a supportive rehabilitation facility. John Clements Social Membership will be included with access to a number of indoor sports.

4.3 **Key Issues**

The key issues are Green Belt policy, design and visual impact and parking

4.3.1 **Green Belt policy**

The site is within the Green Belt. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF explains that local planning authorities should regard new buildings as inappropriate development in Green Belt however one of the exceptions is given as:

'provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'

In this case the proposed Touchstone Wellness Centre is intended to assess, support and motivate people into exercise encouraging them to take up outdoor sporting activities such as those offered at the John Clements Sports and Community Centre, including tennis, football and cricket as well as indoor sports The proposed building would be used to assess customers fitness levels using specialist equipment.

The Wellness Centre has already been established within the existing John Clements Sports & Community Centre with the provision of various assessment equipment.

Whilst the proposed use is welcome in that it encourages people to become more active and therefore healthier with all of the consequent social and community benefits, my concern is that the provision of this facility is not directly related to the provision of outdoor sport and outdoor recreation. Unlike the clubhouse/ sports pavilion, changing rooms, spectator stands and tennis courts at this site which have direct association with outdoor sport and recreation the proposed building and usage of it is more of a tenuous link. There is no guarantee that once a persons fitness has been assessed and a diet and fitness programme has been recommended that the person will actively partake in outdoor sport at the site and the taking up of indoor sports such as badminton and table tennis as suggested in the supporting documentation does meet the exemption identified in paragraph 89 of the NPPF. Indeed customers may wish to

limit their exercise to indoor sports and / or dietary / lifestyle changes without using any of the facilities at the John Clements Sports and Community Centre. In reality the building could be provided in any location and its use has limited nexus or connection with the outdoor sports facilities at the Bury Lane site.

The application site is within the Green Belt and as such there are restrictions on development as set out in Section 9 of the NPPF. I am concerned that this proposal, when taken cumulatively with other built development permitted at the site will result in encroachment into the countryside contrary to one of the five purposes of the Green Belt. The building is not insignificant in size – at over 12 metres in length and 6 metres in width it will reduce openness on the site.

The submitted supporting documents do not make any mention of Green Belt policy which is a key consideration with this application.

I consider that taking into account the specific uses within the proposed building i.e. the assessment, measurement and monitoring of fitness levels and the tenuous and lack of direct connection with outdoor sport and recreation at the site, that the proposed use is 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt and that there are no very special circumstances apparent to justify an exception being made to Green Belt policy in this instance.

4.3.2 **Design and Visual impact**

The proposed building has a traditional design and appearance with slate roof and cladding and I raise no objection to the design in this location. Its appearance would not be harmful to the visual amenities of the locality and there are no nearby residents that would be directly affected by the siting of the building or its intended use.

4.3.3 **Parking**

The proposed building would be located on an existing car park effectively resulting in the loss of at least 4 car parking spaces. No additional parking spaces are proposed. The parking requirement for a D2 use using the Council's Parking Standards document would be 5 spaces. Whilst the car park is not fully utilised during the day during sporting events and at weekends the car park is likely to be more fully used and therefore the loss of car parking spaces (approximately 4 spaces) together with the additional requirement for 5 spaces means that the development has the potential to result in parking congestion and cars parking in the access road.

4.4 **Conclusion**

The proposed development is considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which very special circumstances have not been clearly demonstrated. The proposed building will lead to encroachment into the Green Belt. As such the development is contrary to the provisions of Section 9 of the NPPF. In addition inadequate parking provision is proposed contrary to Policy 55 of the local plan.

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which very special circumstances have not been clearly demonstrated. The proposed building will lead to encroachment into the Green Belt. As such the development is contrary to the provisions of Section 9 of the NPPF. In addition inadequate parking provision is proposed contrary to Policy 55 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council has not acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant as in the Council's view the proposal is unacceptable in principle and the fundamental objections cannot be overcome through dialogue. Since no solutions can be found the Council has complied with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Simon Ellis Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 21 May 2018	