

Application Number: 22/003

Nominated Asset: East Oxford Games Hall

Site Address: 5, Collins Street, Oxford OX4 1XS

Ward: St. Clement's

Applicant: Dan Glazebrook, on behalf of an unincorporated group of 21 people

Recommendation: The Head of Planning Services is recommended to:

1. **Disagree** that the Nominated Asset should be confirmed as an Asset of Community Value
2. **Disagree** to include the asset on the City Council's Register of Local Assets of Community Value Register and place the asset on the Local Land Charge Register.

Background to Report.

1. The Localism Act and the Assets of Community Value Regulations set out the opportunities and procedures to follow for communities wishing to identify assets of community value and have them listed.
2. The City Council is able to list a nominated asset if, in its, opinion:

An actual current use of the building or other land that is not an ancillary use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community; AND

Is it realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land that will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

OR

There is a time in the recent past when an actual use of the building or other land that was not ancillary use furthered the social wellbeing or interests of the local community; AND

It is realistic to think that there is a time in the next five years when there could be non-ancillary use of the building or other land that would further (whether or not in the same way as before) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

3. These definitions have been taken from the Government's Regulations. There is no national guidance as to what the key terms in these definitions mean. It is for the nominating organisation in the first instance to argue why it considers the nominated asset meets the definition in the Regulations.

4. If the owner objects to their property being placed on the List, they have a right in the first instance to an internal review by the City Council of this decision.

Nomination

5. Dan Glazebrook, on behalf of an unincorporated group of 21 people has submitted a nomination for the inclusion of the East Oxford Games Hall in St. Clement's on the Council's register of Assets of Community Value. The nomination letter was received by Oxford City Council via email on 19 June 2023. A plan of the nominated area is attached to this report.
6. The group has argued that the East Oxford Games Hall is an asset of community value on the following grounds:
 - a) The East Oxford Games Hall is a much-cherished local sports centre that has played a significant, and often pivotal, role in the lives of almost everyone who grew up in the local area.
 - b) The building has taken on an additional importance given the closure of the Temple Cowley swimming pool and sports facility in 2014 and especially since the closure of the East Oxford Community Centre in 2022.
 - c) The closure of the Games Hall certainly does entail such a loss without adequate re-provision, hence the urgent need to register the building as a community asset before the last community provision in the area is destroyed.

Response to consultation

7. The freehold for the premises is held by the Estate Services and Communities team. They were notified about the nomination of the premises in writing in June 2023.

Assessment

8. Mr Glazebrook and other members of this unincorporated group have made this application. All members are residents in the Oxford area and appear to have a local connection to the site. The nomination meets the requirements section 5c of the Regulations.
9. The Regulations require the City Council to consider whether the East Oxford Games Hall meets the definition of an Asset of Community Value as set out in section 88 of the Localism Act, i.e. in this case that it is currently, or in the recent past has been, in a use that furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, and also that it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community (whether or not in the same way).

Whether the current use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community

10. East Oxford Games Hall, was closed in 2020 by Oxford City Council and therefore has not been furthering the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

Whether it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

11. Planning consent has already been granted for the demolition of the East Oxford Games Hall, is strong evidence that the current use of the Hall will not continue in the future. Also, during the planning process, a report was specifically prepared in relation to the loss of Community Space, which provides details of the consultations that OCC had with hirers of the hall to discuss relocating to other nearby venues.
12. A planning application (ref: 20/01298/CT3) was approved last year and gained cabinet approval from November 2021. This application consists of demolishing the games hall and building 14 shared ownership housing units at the site. These are much needed and will help Oxford City Council to comply with housing policies and to provide housing to the local community.
13. In addition, demolition is set to start after 8 August so again strong evidence that the current use of the hall will not continue in the future. Halting this process will incur serious costs.
14. The East Oxford Games Hall was not fit for purpose, had poor carbon performance and was at the end of its useful life. There were only 12 groups that regularly used it, all of these groups have been found alternative spaces, or have found alternative spaces themselves. Some of the groups have indicated that they are very keen to move to the improved community centre when it opens and they will be accommodated accordingly.

Conclusion

15. To conclude, the East Oxford Games Hall is not suitable to be nominated as an asset of community value. A decision had already been made for the games hall to be demolished and for the site to be developed to provide affordable housing for the city and, as such is unlikely to further social wellbeing or social interests. Given that the building's life had expired, the building had been disused for a considerable amount of time and that alternative space for remaining users had been found. The nominated games hall does not meet the criteria required to be an asset of community value.

Decision

I confirm that:

Nominated Asset: East Oxford Games Hall

Site Address: 5, Collins Street, Oxford OX4 1XS

Should not be an Asset of Community Value and not included on the City Council's Register of Local Assets of Community Value Register and not placed on the Local Land Charge Register.

Name: David Butler
Title: Head of Planning Services

Signature: 
Date: 1st August 2023

Background Papers: Nomination letter, Site location map

Contact Officer: Alexander Sutton
Extension: x2695
Date: 1 August 2023

Site location Map

