

Appendix two – Officer’s comments on objection

Please find below Officer’s comments on the points raised by the Objection letter.

1. The Role of Gloucester City Council

Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester City Council and Active Gloucestershire have been working together for a number of years to facilitate the provision of a Sports Hub in the Podsmead area. At the start of 2017 Active Gloucestershire were commissioned by the City Council to bring together interested parties who could deliver the Sports Hub. Blackbridge Charitable Community Benefit Society (CCBS) was set up with experienced Directors from the voluntary, charitable and sports sectors. Public meetings and consultations have taken place. The Sports Hub is in the City Plan and the Health and Strategy.

The County Council did own the land but this has now transferred to the City Council.

The City Council as the potential landowner have been in discussion with Blackbridge CCBS prior to the planning application. The Council as landowner has no influence on the planning system.

2. There has been no procurement process for this disposal

An independent valuation of the land has been undertaken and the value was stated as being nominal due to the restrictions on the use of the land. The land was transferred by the County Council for £1 and it is proposed that the lease is at a rent of £1pa. This information is in the Cabinet Report dated 12 July 2023.

As the value of the land is £1, there is no disposal at less than best consideration and therefore no subsidy is being given.

3. Disposal of Public Open Space at an Undervalue

An independent valuation has been obtained stating the value of the land given the restriction on its use is a nominal amount. There is not considered to be a disposal at an undervalue.

The issues with GL1 and Oxstalls Tennis Centre were specific to that operator. A new interim provider was identified quickly and a procurement process is underway to find a long term operator.

4. The Proposed Leaseholder/Tenant

Blackbridge CCBS was set up for the purpose of providing and running the sports hub facility. It has been successful in acquiring funding from Government and other sources to be able to build the facility. The Directors have experience of fund raising, delivering and running projects and sports facilities. The risk and responsibility for the project will be taken by Blackbridge CCBS.

The land is only permitted to be used as a community sports hub.

5. Financial Risk to The City Council from tenant failure

With everything there are risks involved. If the tenant were to fail then the Council would look for another tenant to take on the property. The existing or future operator for GL1 and Oxstalls Tennis Centre could be approached to take on the operation of the facility if another tenant could not be found.

The six directors of Blackbridge CCBS are experienced in applying for funds/grants, delivering community projects and running community sports facilities.

6. Enforceability of County Council Restriction and Liability for Leaseholder Breach

The lease will contain provisions that will restrict the use of the land and the assigning and subletting of the premises. Blackbridge CCBS will only be permitted to use the land as a community sports hub and will only be able to assign the lease to a not for profit community group for community sports use. The 125 year lease for the sports hub will protect the land for community sports use and prevent disposal for residential development.