

**Proposal** Bat & Ball Community Centre

**Applicant** Sevenoaks Town Council

**Ward** Sevenoaks Northern

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the **£1,200,000.00** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Bat & Ball Community Centre” be approved for the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Strong local support for the project;
- The scheme forms part of a planned strategy to address the need for infrastructure.
- There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.

### Introduction

- 1 Sevenoaks Town Council is one of 31 parish/town councils that operate within Sevenoaks District. Sevenoaks Town Council shares its administrative town boundaries with Seal, Sevenoaks Weald, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Otford and Kemsing.
- 2 Officers received the application for CIL funding on 29.10.2018.
- 3 Members should note that Sevenoaks Town Council have previously submitted an application for CIL funding at the last CIL Board in May 2018. The proposal was to refurbish the Bat and Ball station building with associated works to access. The Town Council were successful in their application and secured £258,274.00 of CIL funding.

### Description of Proposal

- 4 The proposal submitted is for alterations and improvements to the existing Sevenoaks (Bat & Ball) community centre. The works include a front, side and link extension and the erection of a cycle and bin store. The project is proposed as there has been an increased demand for high quality community

facilities in the area and as significant growth is planned in the immediate area within the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Draft Local Plan. Planning permission for these works was approved by Sevenoaks District Council on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

- 5 It is envisaged that the new Bat & Ball Centre will be one of the key projects for the regeneration of the Bat & Ball area and complimenting and interactive with the adjoining station refurbishment.

### **Funding**

- 6 Sevenoaks Town Council have stated in their application that to complete the Bat & Ball Community Centre will cost an estimated £2.7 million. It has been confirmed that a majority of the funding will come from the Town Council's reserves, and the application states that no additional reserves or funding is available.
- 7 Members should also note that, other than the contribution of the Town Council, no other funding streams have been identified in the application.
- 8 To meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, Sevenoaks Town Council has applied to the Board for £1,200,000.00 of CIL funding.

### **Representations and Support**

- 9 The application submitted indicates that Sevenoaks Town Council is not working in partnership with any other organisation to deliver the scheme. Therefore, it should be assumed that the Town Council is the sole organisation for the delivery of this scheme.
- 10 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
  - Cllr. Marilyn Canet (SDC Ward Member for Sevenoaks Northern)
  - Cllr. Roderick Hogarth (Mayor of Sevenoaks Town)

### **Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid**

#### *Principal Criteria met*

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Strong local support for the scheme;
- The scheme forms part of a planned strategy to address the need for infrastructure.
- There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.

*Appraisal*

*Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community*

- 11 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed.
- 12 From the information submitted, it is clear that the redevelopment of the new Bat and Ball centre will be one of the key projects for the regeneration in the area. Evidence submitted with the bid states that the Sevenoaks District Council's Draft Economic Development Strategy states that the continuing growth of the District has to be matched where possible by additional infrastructure to support our communities. It is also submitted that an improvement to the external appearance and perception of the area may increase investor confidence, which could then provide a catalyst for further local investment. Therefore in my view, it has been shown that there are potential economic benefits to the proposed scheme.
- 13 It is also clear from the information submitted that the community centre already acts as a community hub and a number of play groups, organisations, businesses, community groups, dance groups and churches use this facility. Therefore the improvement of the existing facilities would benefit all these community groups. This indicates a clear social benefit to this scheme.
- 14 Whilst it is recognised that there will be environmental improvements to the proposal, due to more efficient methods of construction, more efficient lighting and heating systems and also an improvement to the external appearance, it is considered that there will not be a wider, specific environmental benefit to the proposal.

*Strong local support for the scheme*

- 15 A further key consideration when assessing applications for the CIL Board is to determine whether the scheme has local support from the local community.
- 16 As described above, the application is supported by the ward member for Sevenoaks Northern. The Mayor of Sevenoaks has written a letter of support stating that the redevelopment of this community centre will make Bat and Ball a better place to live, work and visit. It will provide an aesthetic benefit and that the local and wider community is in support of this project.
- 17 Therefore, it has been clearly demonstrated that the application has strong local support from the local community and its representatives.

The scheme forms part of a planned strategy to address the need for infrastructure.

- 18 Applicants to the CIL Board are asked to demonstrate whether the project is identified as part of any strategy. In this case the applicant has indicated that the need for the redevelopment of this site is established in in the Northern Sevenoaks Master plan and the emerging Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst this has not been informally adopted, it does indicate a local desire to redevelop the site.
- 19 In addition, the site is allocated for mixed use, including a community provision in the Draft Sevenoaks Local Plan and therefore this proposal is in keeping with this aim. The station and wider has also been identified as an area in need of further investment and improvement in the Sevenoaks District Council's Economic Development Strategy. The applicant has also highlighted that the priorities laid out in the Sevenoaks District Council Community Plan 2016 - 2019 also support this project. These include:
- To target, support and deliver activities for adults to increase physical activity and reduce obesity.
  - To support improvements to leisure and sports facilities.
  - To work with local people to provide strong, active and sustainable communities and to make the best of community spaces and facilities.
- 20 This proposal clearly is in keeping with a number of strategies and objectives set out in a number of local and district wide documents. Whilst some of these are emerging, they still indicate a desire to redevelop the centre and the surrounding area and it is therefore considered that this proposal meets this criteria.

There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.

- 21 In order to benefit from CIL funding, the applicant is also required to show that there is sufficient certainty that the scheme put forward under the bid will be delivered.
- 22 As mentioned above Sevenoaks Town Council have already sought planning permission for the project proposed. In addition to this, the applicant has the legal right to carry out the scheme. They have a project manager, Architect, quantity surveyor, structural engineer and mechanical services engineer in place. They have also provided a clear time scale for the proposal.
- 23 It is therefore considered that the applicant has submitted sufficient evidence to show that there is certainty that the project will be delivered.

Other considerations

*Planning permission*

24 An additional consideration of the criteria in which applications are assessed, is whether a proposal has the appropriate consents in place to carry out the project. As stated above planning permission was granted for the scheme in November 2018 and therefore the relevant consents have been sought in this case.

**Conclusion**

25 It is clear that the project provides strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the local and wider community. It is in keeping with a number of local and district wide strategies. The applicant has provided evidence to show that there is local support for the project and also that there is sufficient certainty that the scheme put forward will be delivered.

26 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £1,200,000.00 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. Whilst it is understood that this is a significant amount of money, due to the amount of money being put forward by the applicant and also the wider benefits of the project it is considered that funding be approved. Approving this bid would provide good value for CIL money applied for compared to the cost of the overall project.

**Appendices**                      Appendix E1 - Original bidding proforma and supporting information

**Background Papers**              None

**Contact Officer**                      Simon Taylor (ext. 7134)

**Richard Morris**  
**Chief Planning Officer**