
Committee Date:	19/02/2015	Application Number:	2014/07147/PA
Accepted:	16/12/2014	Application Type:	Full Planning
Target Date:	17/03/2015		
Ward:	Springfield		

Sparkhill Pool and Fitness Centre, Stratford Road, Sparkhill, B11 4EA

Demolition of existing swimming pool building and erection of two storey fitness centre and swimming pool building with associated works to include infrastructure, parking and landscaping

Applicant: Places for People Leisure Management
Waters Edge, Riverside Way, Watchmoor Park, Camberley, GU19 5YL

Agent: Roberts Limbrick Ltd
The Carriage Building, Bruton Way, Gloucester, GL1 1DG

Recommendation

Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal
- 1.1. Consent is sought for the demolition and erection of two-storey swimming pool and fitness centre building on the vacant Sparkhill Swimming Baths site.
- 1.2. The existing Category "B" Locally Listed Building (Sparkhill Baths) was closed in 2008 and is no longer accessible due to structural and Health and Safety concerns. The existing facilities, including pool dimensions and changing facilities do not comply with Sport England standards. The means of access into the building is via steps with no ramp or lift for disabled users, the elderly or parents with young children and pushchairs and as a result does not comply with the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3. This proposal would result in the demolition of a Category "B" Locally Listed Building (2,512 sq. metres) and erection of a contemporary two-storey replacement building (3,109 sq. metres) to provide new sports and community facilities. The new building would front onto Stratford Road and would have a maximum width of approximately 29 metres and a maximum depth of approximately 61 metres. The building would be approximately 8 metres in height. The total site area is approximately 0.3 hectares.
- 1.4. The design of the building would be strongly influenced by the adjoining Victorian Library Building with the heights of the stone bands, windows and parapets forming the main Stratford Road elevation. The building would step down in height to the adjacent Sparkhill Library. Amended plans have been provided with the over-sailing first floor that would provide a canopy to the wider steps and reduced ramp height to the side that would lead up to the elevated centralised main access doors to the new building. The proposed materials would be brickwork and glazing panels at ground floor level. At front first floor level above the grey metal cladded beam; stone and coloured terracotta panels are proposed that would align with the stone detailing on the library and continue around the south east and south west elevations. The

columns at ground floor are expressed in the glazing and fenestration at first floor level. A brise soleil would sit above the glazing running the full extent of the curtain walling on the front elevation. Glass vertical coloured fins add to the solar shading provided by the brise soleil and add colour and interest to the facades.

- 1.5. The internal layout of the replacement building would comprise a reception and foyer incorporating café/ servery area, administration/ sales office, 25 metre pool (6 lane), 13 metre learning pool and changing facilities at ground floor; and a fitness suite, multi use studio, community room, staff and changing facilities at first floor.
- 1.6. There would be no alterations to the existing vehicle/ pedestrian access arrangements to the application site and the adjoining St. Johns Primary School, which would remain from Stratford Road. The existing vehicle access road would continue to operate on a one-way system to the sides and rear of the application site. There would be 3 horizontal disabled bays and 6 covered cycle storage spaces provided within the forecourt of the site. The proposal also includes a side covered walkway that provides an inter-connecting link from Sparkhill Park and a public car park (92 spaces) with the application site. The accompanying Transport Statement also explores options for the provision of a coach drop off/ pick up area for school children on Stratford Road fronting the application site. The applicants have also confirmed that if the existing number of parking spaces causes a concern on the surrounding roads, they would further explore options to submit a separate planning application to modify the existing Sparkhill Park car park layout to the rear of the site in order to increase the available number of spaces.
- 1.7. The proposed opening hours would be 0600-2300 daily. The use would employ 25 full-time and 50 part-time equivalent staff at the site.
- 1.8. The following documents have been submitted in support of the proposal:
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Planning and Heritage Statement
 - Sustainability Statement
 - Transport Statement and Draft Travel Plan
 - Noise and Vibration Survey and Assessment Report
 - Desk Study and Land Contamination Study
 - Ecological Appraisals/ Surveys
 - Tree Survey Report/ Plan
 - Lighting Statement
 - Demolition and Construction Method Statement
- 1.9. The replacement of the swimming pool building is part of a wider redevelopment programme by the City Council that would include a further four new pools (Erdington, Stechford, Northfield and Icknield Port Loop) to be built in Birmingham. The proposed 25 metre swimming pool is an Olympic Games legacy, being one of the training tanks from the 2012 London Olympics.

[Location Plan](#)

[Proposed Site Plan](#)

[Proposed Front and Side Elevation Plans](#)

[Proposed Ground Floor Plan](#)

[Proposed First Floor Plan](#)

2. [Site & Surroundings](#)

- 2.1. The Sparkhill baths building, dated 1931, is Locally Listed, grade B, and is located on the south-western side of Stratford Road. The swimming baths comprises two pools with changing facilities. It was designed by architect Hurley Robinson and is constructed in an Art Deco style of brick and stone. Due to the changing ground levels of approximately 1.5 metres, the front elevation of the building and adjoining buildings fronting onto Stratford Road are elevated with steps projecting from the facade that are constructed from red brick with guildstone dressing. The vehicle and pedestrian access is to all sides of the building and is shared with the adjoining St. Johns Primary School. The existing access road operates on a one-way system with a limited number of parking bays to the side and rear of the building.
- 2.2. The surrounding area is mixed commercial and residential in character. To the south are part two-storey and single-storey modern school buildings. Adjoining the site to the north is the two-storey Sparkhill Library building, which is Locally Listed at grade A, beyond which is the Police Station, which is grade B Locally Listed. Both of these buildings (Sparkhill Library and Police Station) are of red brick with decorative stone detailing. There is a block of terraced residential dwellinghouses on the opposite side of Stratford Road which is Locally Listed at grade C. There is also a small retail parade on the opposite side of Stratford Road at the junction of Clarence Road and Avondale Road. Sparkhill Park together with the associated car park and Council gym is situated to the southeast of the site and are accessed from Court Road. Sparkhill Neighbourhood Centre and Springfield Neighbourhood Centre as defined by Shopping and Local Centres SPD are situated 190 metres and 250 metres respectively to the north and south of the application site.

[Location Map](#)

[Street View](#)

3. [Planning History](#)

- 3.1. No relevant planning history.

4. [Consultation/PP Responses](#)

- 4.1 Press & site notices displayed. Adjoining residents, Resident Associations, Ward Councillors and Roger Godsiff MP consulted. Councillor Jerry Evans, Councillor Habib Ul Rehman and one adjoining neighbour support the proposal on the following grounds:
 - Community health and well-being
 - Congratulate the Council on imaginative designed and attractive new facility
 - Generously glazed front elevation provides light and uplifts the appearance in the area in contrast to the forbidding frontage of the present building
 - Suggestions in regards to the roof area of the new building to house solar arrays and avoid substantial ongoing pool heating costs.
- 4.2 One letter of objection from adjoining neighbour, who objects on behalf of her elderly mother that suffers from Alzheimers on the following grounds:
 - Lack of car parking and traffic congestions from existing schools, Doctors and current fitness centre

- Lacking of available parking facilities outside her property and risk associated with her mother, who is vulnerable to falls
- 4.3 Twentieth Century Society object to the proposed demolition of this non-designated heritage asset on the following grounds:
- Considered to be of local significance by its elegant brick and stone dressed façade with classical and modern design references
 - It complements the design of the adjacent locally listed Victorian library in terms of materials, massing and proportions.
 - It forms part of a group of architecturally significant public buildings that include Sparkhill Police Station that line this side of Stratford Road
 - The proposed complete demolition of this building for a swimming pool facility is substantial and potentially unnecessary loss of local 20th century heritage
 - Recommend that the applicant explores options to retain parts if not all of the original Sparkhill Baths building.
- 4.4 Conservation and Heritage Panel expressed the following comments on original plans:
- Disappointment that this Locally Listed Building was proposed for demolition both in view of its important contribution to the local area and it is last surviving example of the architect Archibald Hurley Robinson's work in the City
 - Its restrained Art Deco design complements the more ornamental eccentricities of the adjacent Victorian library
 - Concerns raised to its scale and relationship with the adjacent library building
 - The lack of integration of the ramp into the overall composition
 - The poor public realm/ car parking to the front
 - The elevated position of the ground level of the swimming pool and lack of interaction with the street
 - Less than favourable views from Avondale Road
 - Panel preferred to see the existing building brought back into use, or if this was not possible, then the applicant needs to investigate ways to incorporate some of the existing fabric into the new building
- 4.5 Transportation Development – No objection, subject to conditions to include school Travel Plan, construction method statement, parking management strategy and parking areas laid out prior to use.
- 4.6 Leisure Services/ Strategic Sport (applicants) – Whilst recognising the locally listed status of the existing building, they fully support the replacement of this facility with a sympathetic, modern, efficient design that is sustainable for future generations. It has been well documented through options appraisals and swimming strategies, the need for a quality swimming facility within this area that meets the needs of the District demographic make-up and the replacement of the existing building with the proposal submitted is well supported by both Sports England and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA).

There have also been various meetings that have included Springfield Ward Committees, meetings with District and Local Ward Members, Save Our Sparkhill Pool User Group and St. John's Primary School, which have been totally positive in terms of the design of the new facility, the layout and facility mix, with many complementary comments on the look of the new pool building and how it is sympathetic to the surrounding buildings whilst still retaining prominence and a focal point for the community.

- 4.7 Sports England – Fully supports the proposal as it seeks to provide new facilities to meet current and future demands for sporting participation.
- 4.8 Regulatory Services – No objections subject to conditions relating to the restriction of cumulative noise levels from plant and equipment, insulation to plant and machinery and land contamination investigations.
- 4.9 The Access Committee – No objections.
- 4.10 West Midlands Police – No objections subject to the proposal incorporating Secured by Design and Designing out Crime Principles.

5. Policy Context

- 5.1. NPPF (2012), Adopted UDP (2005), Draft BDP (2013), SPG Places for All (2001), SPD Car Parking Guidelines (2012), SPD Shopping and Local Centres (2012),

6. Planning Considerations

- 6.1. The main considerations in the determination of this application are:

6.2. **Planning Policy** – Paragraphs 69 and 70 of the NPPF (Promoting healthy communities) both promote the development of and guards against the loss of social, recreational and cultural establishments to meet the needs of the existing and new communities. The Draft Birmingham Development Plan paragraph 3.5 (objectives) aims to deliver that vision and ensure that future developments meet the aspirations for the city in encouraging better health and well-being through the provision of new and existing recreation, sport and leisure facilities that are linked to good quality public open space. Policy 3.63A of the UDP identifies that public swimming provision is important and that a chain of leisure and traditional pools will be maintained across the city. The proposal for a replacement building is also extensively supported by Springfield Ward Committee, District and Local Ward Members, Save Our Pool User Group and St. John's Primary School. Consequently, I consider the provision of improved sporting facilities at this location is acceptable in principle.

6.3. **Demolition of a Locally Listed Building and impact on adjoining Locally Listed Building** – Concerns have been raised by the Twentieth Century Society and Conservation and Heritage Panel in regards to the demolition of this Locally Listed Building. The application site is a Locally Listed category “B” building that has no statutory protection as it is not a Designated Heritage Asset in terms of paragraph 132 to 134 of the NPPF. UDP policy 3.26 states that the demolition of buildings on the local list will be resisted and proposals for demolition of such buildings should ensure that the features of historic or architectural interest are preserved and that all new work and any new buildings are of at least of equivalent quality to the original building and make a similar contribution to its setting. When considering applications that affect directly or indirectly a Non-designated Heritage Asset, the NPPF advises in paragraph 135 that “a balanced judgement will be required having regards to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the Heritage Asset”. Sparkhill Swimming Baths building is not fit for purpose and has been closed since 2008 due to structural problems with the building and health and safety concerns. The site constraints include the age of the building and narrowness of the plot size. The applicants have explored various options that include the re-use of the existing building and found that the current building form and layout could not be adapted or altered to accommodate the proposed legacy swimming pool and changing facilities

that would comply with accessibility, sustainability and Sport England requirements. To retain the existing building and bring it up to modern standards of construction and design would have a significant impact on the efficiency and extent of facilities that could be offered on the site in terms of modern design standards, sustainability and affordability of construction. It is considered that a case of special circumstances has been adequately demonstrated by the applicants that the existing building is not worthy of retention. Furthermore, the proposed new building would be a fit-for-purpose sports and leisure facility for the Sparkhill area, that would meet the standards set by Leisure Services, the ASA, Sport England, Environmental Health Regulations and Building Control Regulation and those benefits would outweigh concerns over the demolition of this Locally Listed Building in this instance.

- 6.4. Members are also advised that the applicants can submit a prior approval application for the demolition of this Locally Listed grade “B” building, the determination of which would only relate to the method of demolition and any proposed restoration of the site. Accordingly loss of the current building cannot be prevented on heritage grounds.
- 6.5. I note concerns have been raised by the Twentieth Century Society and Conservation and Heritage Panel in regards to retaining or incorporation of the existing fabric into the new building. Officers accept that it is the façade of the building that is its most important feature and the proposal does incorporate options to re-use the materials from the existing building. The existing crest has been integrated into the design of the main façade of the building. The proposal, subject to appropriate conditions, would also investigate the re-use of the existing stone into the façades of the building or within the hard landscaping, which is considered to be a significant improvement to the original scheme.
- 6.6. **Impact on design and visual amenity** – I note concerns have been raised by Twentieth Century Society and Conservation and Heritage Panel in regards to scale, massing, materials/ re-use of materials and relationship of the replacement building with the adjacent library building. The proposal would be made up of a variety of materials. The choice of materials for the body of the building and proportioning the facades, include facing bricks, stone bands, glazing panels, coloured terracotta panels, curtain walling etc would reflect and be complementary to the adjacent library building/ Police Station, thus providing consistency in respect of materials used around the adjoining sites. The proposal would also explore the re-use of elements of the existing stone façade into the new building. To ensure that the materials complement the adjoining Library Building and Police Station and are not intrusive in its setting, it is considered reasonable to impose a condition for the submission of the materials to include re-use of existing stone within the facades of the proposed building.
- 6.7. In terms of the overall scale and massing of the building, it would be complementary to the adjoining buildings and would not appear as an out of character or overly prominent feature, particularly when read against the Library building in the foreground. The building takes the shape of a rectangle, as per the existing building on the site. The overall scale of the building has been broken up through the glazed over sailing first floor that would reduced the height of the building. Furthermore, the overall scale of the building has been designed to have interesting facades through the use of different materials in the elevations.
- 6.8. Concerns raised by Conservation and Heritage Panel to the access ramp, poor public realm/ car parking to the frontage, elevated position of ground floor level and lack of interaction with the street and re-position of access doors are noted.

Amended plans have been submitted that have reduced the height of the building by incorporating an internal ramp, reduced height/ re-sited/ integration of the external ramp on the front elevation and widening of the external staircase with the installation of more centralised access doors in order to improve visual amenity and views from Avondale Road. There has also been removal of the front boundary wall/ tarmac area to the front of building with extensive hard and soft landscaping to improve the quality of the public realm. The proposal also provides an active frontage with a side covered walkway that links Stratford Road to Sparkhill Park with improved pedestrian routes and natural surveillance through the site. City Design are therefore supportive of the scheme.

- 6.9. **Impact on residential amenity** – The application site is bounded to all sides by the park, community and commercial uses. Consequently, the proposal is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the amenity of adjoining residential occupiers within the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 6.10. **Impact on trees, ecology and landscaping** – The application site is entirely surrounded by hard standing. There are existing trees to the rear of the access road and within the adjoining school site. There is a small grass verge to the front of the site up to the rear of the existing wall. The Tree Survey highlights that there are 7 trees within the application site and on the adjoining school site, out of which one tree that is situated on the boundary of the adjoining school is to be removed in order to facilitate better access and addressing existing and future structural conflicts. The tree to be removed is not protected by a preservation order. My Tree Officer has raised no objections to the proposal. Amended plans have been provided that have removed the front boundary wall and additional soft and hard landscaping within the forecourt is proposed, subject to detail conditions, that would ensure that all new trees/ shrubs that are planted make a substantial contribution to the building and overall area in amenity terms.
- 6.11. The ecology survey undertaken reflects the actual situation on site and concludes that there would be no ecological impact identified from the proposed demolition of the building. The City Ecologist has raised no objections subject to requiring all demolition works be carried out by the end of May 2015. However, if the demolition is not possible before June 2015, a further condition is recommended for an updated survey to be undertaken at the site.
- 6.12. **Impact on highway safety** – I note concerns have been raised by a neighbour in regards to parking and traffic congestion. Transportation Development have raised no objections to the proposal. I concur with this view. The proposal includes a side covered walkway that provides an inter-connecting link from the application site to Sparkhill Park and a public car park for 92 spaces. Amended plans have been submitted that have modified the disabled parking layout and cycle storage within the forecourt of the site.
- 6.13. The observations made within the Transport Statement regarding the existing on-site parking demand have been confirmed by officer site visits. In view of the observations made, a mechanism to review and mitigate highway related impact associated with the proposed facilities has been considered. This may include the formalising of a coach drop off/ pick up area on Stratford Road fronting the proposed building that may result in the changes to current Traffic Regulation Orders, disabled parking and the Strategic Red Route.
- 6.14. In this instance a likely sum not exceeding £20,000 to enable ongoing monitoring and the implementation of mitigation measures (should the monitoring identify that

these are required) has been offered to monitor proposed swimming pool/ fitness centre related traffic/ parking implications at the site and impact on the local highway network on Stratford Road between the junction of Court Road and Castleford Road. Such measures could include the design and implementation of parking restrictions via Traffic Regulation Orders to modify the existing parking layby to incorporate formal and controlled coach parking and drop off facilities.

- 6.15. This is a similar approach to that adopted on the Meadows Junior and Infant School (Northfield) and Birmingham University School, recently considered by members, and my Transportation Development are happy with this approach. However, in this case, because the City Council is the applicant, a S106 mechanism cannot be used. As such, it is proposed that the sum be secured through a requirement to follow the recommendations in the appropriate section of the Travel Plan (in respect of management and mitigation), which is to be updated yearly and this would be secured through the imposition of an appropriate condition.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposed new building would provide a fit for purpose sports and leisure facility for the Sparkhill area which when combined with special circumstances presented (structural and health & safety) would sufficiently outweigh concerns over the demolition of this Locally Listed Building. The scale, massing, siting, design and appearance of the proposed building is considered acceptable and would not result in any undue impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding area or to the remaining cluster of Locally Listed Buildings. The proposal is considered acceptable in highway safety and amenity terms. This proposal is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. Approve subject to conditions

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- 1 Requires the prior submission of a contamination remediation scheme
 - 2 Requires the prior submission of a contaminated land verification report
 - 3 Requires the prior submission of details of the sound insulation for plant/machinery.
 - 4 Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans
 - 5 Requires the submission of sample materials
 - 6 Requires the prior submission of a construction method statement/management plan
 - 7 Requires the prior submission of boundary treatment details
 - 8 Requires the prior submission of extraction and odour control details
 - 9 Limits the noise levels for Plant and Machinery
 - 10 Requires the submission of a lighting scheme
 - 11 Requires the submission of hard and/or soft landscape details
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- 12 Requires the submission of hard surfacing materials
 - 13 Requires the submission of level details
 - 14 Requires the submission of a drainage scheme
 - 15 Requires the development to be carried out in accordance with an updated and approved Travel Plan, including S278 works
 - 16 Requires the prior submission of cycle storage details
 - 17 Requires the prior submission of a scheme for ecological/biodiversity/enhancement measures
 - 18 Requires the parking area to be laid out prior to use
 - 19 Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)
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Case Officer: Mohammed Akram

Photo(s)

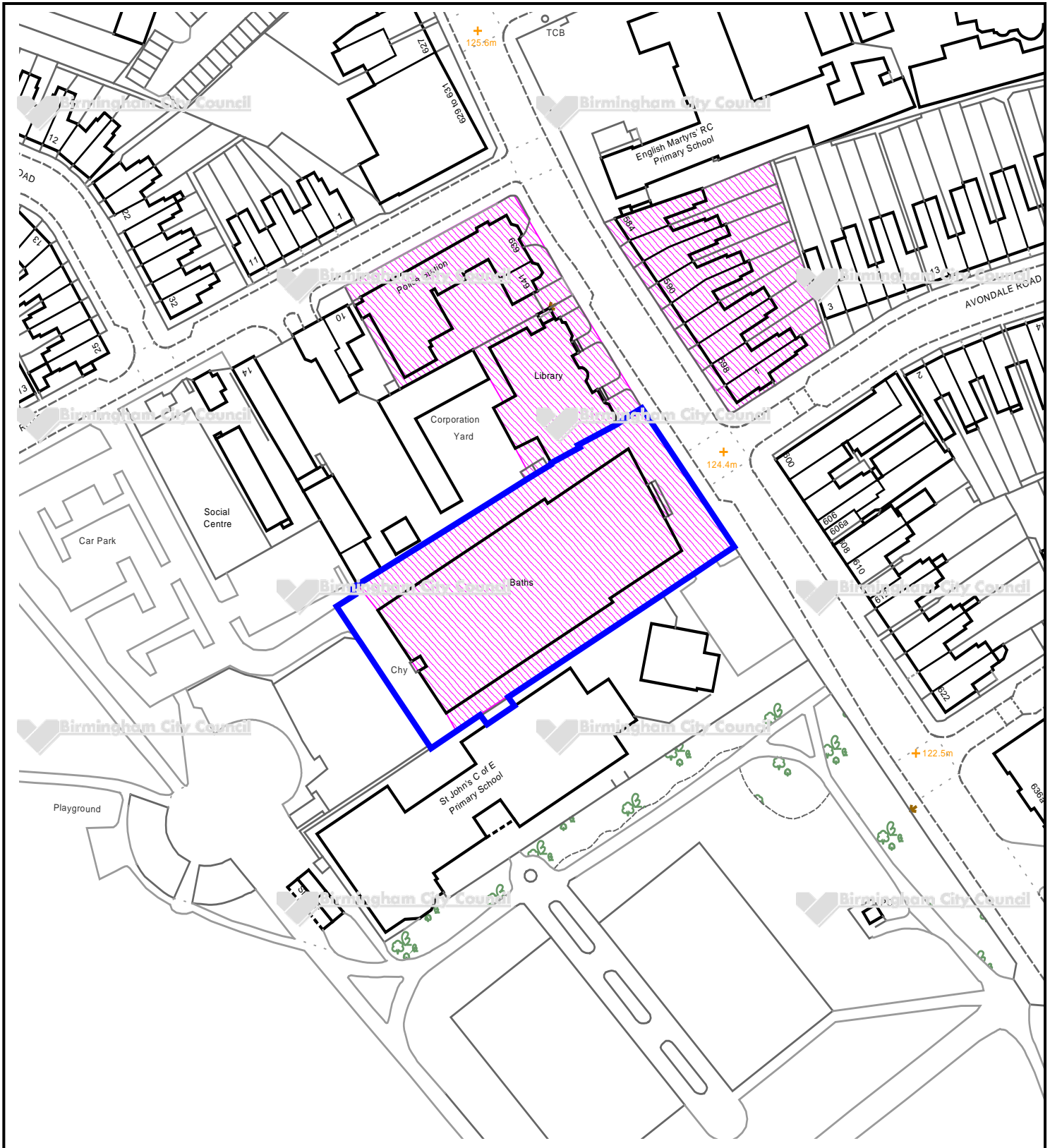


Figure 1: View from Stratford Road



Figure 2: View from Sparkhill Park

Location Plan



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