

Application No: 11/2650M

Location: ASHDENE CP SCHOOL, THORESWAY ROAD, WILMSLOW,
CHESHIRE, SK9 6LJ

Proposal: Construction of a Multi-Use Games Area

Applicant: Ashdene Primary School

Expiry Date: 06-Sep-2011

Date Report Prepared: 29.09.2011

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

MAIN ISSUES

- Design/impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Impact on provision of School sports fields/facilities
- Impact on residential amenity
- Highways safety

REASON FOR REPORT

The scheme of delegation, as outlined in the constitution, requires applications for developments which are on land owned by the Council are to be determined by Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The site to which the application relates is Ashdene Primary School, Wilmslow. The site comprises the School buildings, associated parking area (with spaces for 36 cars), outdoor storage buildings, playground area and sports fields.

The site is located within a Predominantly Residential Area, as defined in the Local Plan. There are dwellings located around all the site boundaries on Rostherne, Capesthorne, Knutsford & Thoresway Roads and Gravel Lane, which have their rear gardens backing on to, or adjoining, the site.

Access to the site is via Thoresway Road, to the east.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposed seeks full planning permission to erect a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on the playing fields, measuring approx. 37m long and 18.5m wide, surrounded by a 3m high open mesh green fence with appropriate rebound facilities. The MUGA is primarily for use by the school but a wider community use of the MUGA is proposed.

New bitumen paths will be laid to connect the access points to the existing playground. Existing wooden storage sheds will be re-located within the grounds under Permitted Development Rights.

Revised plans are in the process of being submitted. The size of the MUGA area has been increased in length a little (approx. 2m) to comply with Sport England recommendations. These revisions are of no material difference.

No flood-lighting is proposed.

RELEVANT HISTORY

There have been applications on the site over the years for additional classrooms, temporary classrooms, glazed roof over existing court-yard, etc. but none directly relevant to the proposed.

POLICIES

North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021

DP1 (Spatial principles applicable to development management)

DP7 (Criteria to promote environmental quality)

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan – saved policies

BE1 (Design principles for new developments)

DC1 (High quality design for new build)

DC2 (Design quality for extensions and alterations)

DC3 (Protection of the amenities of nearby residential properties)

DC6 (Circulation and Access)

H13 (Protecting residential areas)

RT1 (Protection of Open Space)

National Planning Policy Guidance

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development

National Planning Policy Framework (Draft)

CONSULTATIONS

Highways:

No objections, subject to a condition restricting the hours of use, as the traffic in the area is busy and parking is a problem around the times of the start and finish of the school day. Recommend no use for wider community before 17.00 hrs Mon to Fri. No concerns, from a highways safety perspective, regarding use at weekends or on bank holidays.

Environmental Health:

No objections, subject to conditions to control hours of use in order to protect residential amenity. In summary, whilst there is no objection to the construction of a MUGA at Ashdene Primary School, concern is expressed regarding the proposed 'extended' days / hours of use of the MUGA by virtue of the proposal for the MUGA to be used by outside organisations, which has the potential to result in noise nuisance and loss of residential amenity to residents of nearby dwellings. Therefore, it is recommended that the hours of use be reduced from those proposed to 19.30 hours on weekdays. It is also recommended a condition be attached for suitable management of the facility outside school hours.

Leisure Services:

No objections raised. Positive about the steps being taken to improve sporting facilities/opportunities for both school pupils and the wider community. The terms of community use need clarifying. Recommend the surface used is suitable for a broad range of games.

Sport England

No objections, subject to conditions related to 1) design of the MUGA (materials to be used for the surface and the size to be a little longer than proposed); 2) satisfactory Community Use Agreement to be drawn up.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

Wilmslow Town Council:

No objections, subject to conditions related to 1) no floodlights; 2) restrict hours of use (no later than 20.00 hrs) and 3) increase the arboreal boundary.

REPRESENTATIONS

27 No. of representations have been received, primarily from the occupants of neighbouring properties; 26 No. of the representations object to the proposal and 1. No supports the proposal. Many of the objectors note that they have no objection to the MUGA being used for school use only. The range of issues raised are summarised as follows:

- Out of character with residential area/commercial development in residential area
- Detrimental impact on amenity – noise, privacy, litter
- Detrimental visual impact stemming from the proposed 3m high fence
- Highways safety/parking issues
- Impact on outlook from properties (especially when trees have no leaves in winter)

- Facilities management not clear (e.g. domestic arrangements when used by community groups)
- Potential for floodlights in the future
- Potential for extensions in future

Other issues raised which are not planning considerations include security measures at the site and devaluing of properties.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A 'Design & Access Statement/Justification' has been submitted with the application, details of which can be read on file. Some key points are extracted from the document and summarised below. A 'Supplementary Statement' has been submitted during the course of the application, which seeks to address a) some of the concerns raised by neighbours in respect of impact on amenity and b) minor alterations to the MUGA in response to Sport England recommendations.

Design & Access Statement/Justification'

- As background to the proposed the School wish to encourage participation in sport, providing additional facilities for children to use at play at playtime throughout the year.
- The proposed MUGA has followed the Sport England guidelines.
- The MUGA will be located 12.5m from the nearest residential boundary on the eastern side of the School and close to the junior playground; its provision will offer the opportunity for many activities other than football.
- There are currently 2 No. football pitches and a running track on the playing fields. The MUGA can be erected and still leave space for 2 No. junior pitches and the running track can be marked out when used (which is occasional).
- The surface will be all weather; the goals will be recessed 1.5m at each end; the fence will be open mesh with appropriate rebound facilities; no solid board materials will be used (to prevent rebound noise).
- New bitumen paths will be laid to connect the MUGA to the existing playground.
- The MUGA has been oriented to ensure minimal visual impact on surrounding properties. The landscaping/tree cover to the boundaries is well established and forms an effective screening; though some properties are not as well screened.
- No flood-lighting is being sought.
- Vehicle, cycle and pedestrian access will be from the existing site access via Thoresway Road. Existing car parking facilities (36 spaces) will be available for use outside school hours and the playground can accommodate an additional 20 cars, with turning, if required. The existing covered cycle racks will be available for use. There will be no pedestrian access from Gravel Lane outside school hours.
- The hours of use originally proposed are: Mon to Fri 08.00 to 21.00, Saturday 09.00 to 18.00 and no use on Sundays or Bank holidays.

Supplementary Statement

Details can be read on file. Some key points to note are summarised below.

- Original submission did not identify current levels of activity outside school hours and didn't restrict the range of potential users in terms of age groups. A schedule of current non-school activity is provided.
- The School's letting policy clearly sets out the expectation and conditions of any letting of school premises. This policy will be utilised for any letting of the MUGA.
- In order to provide further assurance over level of use and to minimise any adverse impact on residential amenity the school proposes to restrict use of the MUGA beyond that originally outlined. This will be done in three ways: 1) reduce the hours of use Mon to Fri, from 08.00-21.00 to 08.00-20.00; 2) reduce the hours of use on Saturday, from 09.00-18.00 to 09.00-17.00, and 3) all use is to be for supervised school age children through direct managed lettings with constituted clubs/groups in accordance with the draft community use protocol outlined by Sport England (attached at Appendix 3). (It is still proposed not to use the MUGA on Sundays or Bank Holidays).
- It is considered that the use restrictions will minimise impact on residential amenity. If the LPA deem it necessary to reduce the hours of use further, the school will commit to work within such restrictions.
- Propose additional screen planting on the boundary in accordance with a scheme to be agreed with the LPA.
- Ashdene Primary School will closely manage any non school use of the MUGA and incorporate a 'responsible use' condition into the hire agreement. This will specifically provide clear guidance on (a) access to and from the site (b) car parking, (c) acceptable behaviour whilst on the school premises, and (d) arrangements for accessing toilet and changing facilities.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The principle of the proposed is acceptable, subject to according with relevant Development Plan policies.

Policy

The relevant policies are listed above and are related to the issues identified.

Design/impact on the character and appearance of the area

The slightly revised scheme now complies fully with Sport England design requirements. In essence, this is a Multi Use Games Area with a polymeric surface, suitable for a broad range of sports/games. The pitch will be enclosed with a 3m high open mesh, green fence with appropriate rebounds facilities to prevent noise rebound. The MUGA is to be sited close to the existing School buildings and playground, over 35m to the nearest residential property. Some objectors have objected to the 3m high green open mesh fence. However, it is considered that the overall design, including the fence, and the proposed location, does not detract from the character or appearance of the area.

Impact on provision of School sports fields/facilities

The MUGA is to be located on part of the existing sports fields. Sport England seeks to protect playing fields. However, if development on a playing field is to provide replacement sports facilities which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport so as to outweigh the detriment of any loss of a playing field then such development is acceptable. Hence, in this instance, the MUGA would provide a facility for both the School and, to a degree, the wider community which is considered to benefit the wider development of sport compared to the loss of the section of playing field. Also, the existing pitches can be accommodated within the remaining sports field area and the running track, which is only occasionally used (eg. annual sports day), could also be marked out/erased as/when required on the remaining field.

As noted above, Leisure Services also welcome the potential for increased sports opportunities both at the School and within the wider community.

Bearing these points in mind, and the fact that the MUGA is to provide a facility to promote a range of sports, available for use all year round (within agreed periods), it is considered that the proposed will make a positive contribution to the sports facilities at the School as well as the promotion of sport in the wider community.

Impact on residential amenity

A number of residents have objected on the grounds of detrimental impact on amenity, in particular noise, disturbance and outlook. Many are particularly concerned about the impact from the community uses rather than the School's use of the facility. As noted above ('Supplementary Statement') the School has considered the representations made by local residents and made some alterations to the original proposal, thereby restricting the hours and extent of use of the MUGA.

The MUGA and fence are well separated from nearby residential properties and the impact in terms of outlook is considered acceptable. The key issue issues are noise and disturbance and the hours of use.

Wilmslow Town Council recommended restricting hours of use to 20.00 (to protect amenity).

The Environmental Health Officer recommends restricting the hours of use to 19.30 hours on weekdays.

Highways recommend restricting hours of use to no earlier than 17.00 Mon to Fri (to avoid parking issues).

The reduced hours offered by the applicant are as follows: 08.00 to 20.00 Mon to Fri and 09.00 to 17.00 Saturday, with no use on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The applicant has liaised with Sport England, who require a Community Use Agreement to be drawn up (which can be secured by condition, should the application be approved), and the hours the school have in mind and the community groups to whom the facility will be available, should satisfy the requirements of Sport England.

As noted above, the Strategic Highways Manager has recommended the MUGA not to be used by members of the wider community before 17.00 hours Mon to Fri. This will ensure that

during the periods within which the MUGA is used there will be sufficient parking within the School grounds for visitors and any impact on amenity from additional vehicles visiting the site will be limited.

It is considered that the School's letting policy, a suitable Community Use Agreement and an appropriate condition re hours of use, will ensure that the use of the proposed MUGA by groups in the wider community will have a limited and acceptable degree of on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties. Subject to these controls the proposal complies with policy DC3 of the Local Plan and there will be no significant injury to amenity through noise and disturbance.

Recommended hours of use

The proposed is within existing School grounds and is considered to be acceptable subject to appropriate controls on the hours of use. The limit of 8.00pm on weekdays is suggested by Wilmslow Town Council. Following discussion with the Environmental Health Officer, on balance it is considered that a limit of 19.30 hours on weekdays is considered to be appropriate, reasonable and necessary to safeguard amenities of local residents. The hours of 9.00am to 5.00pm on Saturdays is considered to be appropriate with no use on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

To ensure there are no highways safety issues resulting from overspill parking a condition to prevent wider community use prior to 5.00pm on weekdays is considered necessary.

Highways safety

Bearing in mind the comments of the Strategic Highways Manager, it is considered that, with a condition restricting the hours of use outside School hours, there would be no highways safety issues arising from the application as sufficient parking exists to accommodate the wider community use after 5pm.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

To summarise and conclude, the issues raised in objection have been fully considered. It is considered that the design of the proposed is acceptable and not out of keeping with the area. The proposed restrictions on use (hours and groups) are considered to address any concerns raised regarding impact on residential amenity, whilst also ensuring the recommendations of Sport England are met. The restricted hours of use will ensure that no highways safety issues arise from the application. The proposed MUGA will provide improved sports facilities and increased sporting opportunities for the School and also members of the wider community; therefore the MUGA will make a positive contribution to the School's sports facilities. The proposed development accords with all relevant Development Plan policies and it is recommended the application be approved, subject to conditions.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. Commencement of development (3 years)
2. Development in accord with approved revised plans
3. Restrictions on hours of use
4. Details of screen planting
5. Community use agreement

