

**Application No:** 09/1329M

**Location:** EGERTON YOUTH CLUB, MERE HEATH LANE, KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE, WA16 6SL

**Proposal:** SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION TO FORM CHANGING ROOMS/CANTEEN, ALL WEATHER PITCH, EXTENSION/ALTERATION TO CAR PARKING & ACCESS ALTERATIONS & CHANGE OF USE OF NEIGHBOURING AGRICULTURAL FIELD TO FOOTBALL/RUGBY PITCHES.

**For** MR P SWIFT, EGERTON YOUTH CLUB

**Registered** 10-Jun-2009

**Policy Item** No

**Grid Reference** 374606 379678

**Date Report Prepared:** 3 August 2009

#### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

Approve

#### **MAIN ISSUES**

- Whether the proposal is acceptable in the Green Belt
- Impact on highway safety
- Impact upon nature conservation interests

#### **REASON FOR REPORT**

By virtue of the size of the application site, the proposal is defined as a major application.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site comprises a detached two-storey building with surrounding playing fields, front parking area and an adjacent agricultural field.

#### **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

This application seeks full planning permission to erect a single-storey rear extension to form changing rooms and extended canteen, construct a floodlit all weather pitch, extend and alter the existing parking area at the front of the site with alterations to the existing access, and change of use of the adjacent agricultural field to football / rugby pitches with associated engineering operations.

The principle of the development has already been deemed to be acceptable following the approval of the two applications listed below. This current application seeks to make alterations to each of these two previous and extant approvals.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

08/0494P - CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND TO 4 NO. FOOTBALL PITCHES – Approved 20.05.2008

06/2426P - SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSIONS AND CREATION OF FLOODLIT ALL WEATHER PITCH TO REAR. EXTENSIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO CAR PARKING AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING VEHICULAR ACCESS - Approved 18.12.2006

## **POLICIES**

Regional Spatial Strategy – DP1, RDF4, L1.

Local Plan Policy - BE1, GC1, RT1, DC1, DC2, DC3, DC6, DC8, DC9 and DC64

## **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

Highways – No objections subject to conditions

Environmental Health – No objections

Environmental Health Contaminated Land – No objections subject to condition

Knutsford Town Council – No objection subject to the lighting minimising the impact upon neighbours, and the lights being switched off by 10pm.

## **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

One letter of representation has been received commenting that existing hedgerows should be maintained and that an area of marsh / scrub at the far end of the field should be retained in the interests of wildlife.

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

A design and access statement has been submitted outlining the design philosophy behind the proposal. Additionally a statement of justification has been submitted that highlights that the application is for an existing use without intensification, and road safety improvements will result.

The full statements can be viewed online and on the application file.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

## **Principle of Development**

As noted above, the principle of development has already been established. The main considerations in the determination of this application are therefore the differences from these previous permissions. It should also be noted that the applicants are currently in the process of discharging conditions attached to 06/2426P as they wish to commence work within the next few weeks. It is therefore likely that this permission will be implemented.

The key differences include:

- A flat roof to the rear extension, as opposed to the shallow pitched roof previously approved.
- Alterations to the approved fenestration.
- An outdoor terrace at the rear of the extended canteen.
- A reconfigured parking layout.
- Footpath leading from car park to all weather pitch.
- Fencing to all weather pitch increased in height behind goals.
- All weather pitch marginally repositioned.
- Engineering works to level the proposed rugby /football pitches in the adjacent field

## **Green Belt**

### **1) Extension**

The development has been previously accepted as it was considered to be an essential facility for outdoor sport and recreation (and therefore 'appropriate to the Green Belt). The extension is necessary to provide segregated changing facilities (age, home & away, gender) and also to provide a modest extension to the canteen facility. In the absence of the improved changing rooms, the club would fail to provide proper facilities to meet current standards. The alterations to the extension proposed as part of this application have no greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt than the previous permission.

### **2) All-weather pitch**

It is proposed to move the positioning of the all-weather pitch approximately 20 metres further south of the previously approved position. It will still be predominantly behind the rear of the existing building and the floodlights remain as previously approved. The new position of this floodlit pitch is not considered to have any significantly greater impact upon the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt than that previously approved, having regard to surrounding land uses and existing screening. The existing tree belt to the south and west provides an effective screen in these directions and its retention is recommended. The height of the majority of the fencing will remain at 3 metres, with the exception of sections behind the goals that will be 5 metres high. The lightweight construction of the fencing and its height relative to the approved 15 metre high floodlights, and surrounding vegetation, will not result in any further harm to the Green Belt.

### **3) Additional pitches**

The new football pitches in the adjacent field will retain the openness of the Green Belt, and subject to requested cross sections of the field being acceptable, their levelling out will also have an acceptable landscape impact.

#### **4) Parking area**

The existing parking area provides 77 vehicle spaces. Permission 06/2426P increased this to 114 spaces, and under 08/0494P the number of additional spaces was to be agreed via a condition. 163 spaces are now proposed to serve the site as a whole. The majority of these spaces occupy the site of the existing car park and will be formed in tarmac, but the 40 northernmost spaces will be constructed in grasscrete, as an overflow parking area, which will reduce its visual impact. Such an increase in parked vehicles will of course have some impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, however, it is understood that significant on street parking does currently take place at peak times, and provision within the site would therefore result in some improvement to highway safety. Furthermore, the applicants maintain that the intention is not to intensify the use of the site, and it is noted that the number of changing rooms is not increasing over and above that previously approved, which would provide some degree of restriction.

The additional parking areas will result in some encroachment and urbanisation of existing green spaces, however, having regard to the highway safety improvements, the Youth Club's need to modernise and the local community facility that it provides this impact is considered to be acceptable.

#### **Highways**

The Highways department raises no objections to the proposal subject to conditions relating to the access alterations and car, coach and cycle parking. A Green Travel Plan was previously conditioned on 06/2426P (not by legal agreement), however, having regard to the nature and location of the site, it is considered that this would be likely to only include provision for cycling or walking. Highways have not recommended the submission of a travel plan for this application, and it is considered that conditions requiring adequate provision of cycle facilities would serve to promote alternative transport options to the private car equally well in this case.

#### **Design**

The design of the extension is very similar to that previously approved with some fenestration alterations. The roof of the extension is now to be flat rather than the approved very shallow pitched roof. The existing building is flat roofed and therefore the extension will be in keeping with this. Located at the rear of the building, it will not be unduly prominent from public vantage points, and is not considered to have any significant impact upon the character of the area.

#### **Landscaping / Trees**

Some trees within the car park area are identified for removal, however, replacement planting is proposed to mitigate for their loss. There is no indication that the hedgerows to the field boundary will be removed, in fact only a pedestrian access through the hedge is identified on the plans. Cross

sections of the new playing field accommodating the four new pitches have been requested in order to ensure that the levelling off of this field has an acceptable landscape impact. Clarification is also being sought over whether any of the earth required for levelling out the playing fields will need to be brought to the site, or whether it will be taken entirely from within the site. As with the previous permissions landscaping conditions are recommended to ensure appropriate landscaping of the site particularly to the car park area adjacent to Mereheath Lane.

### **Amenity**

Despite the floodlit pitch moving 20 metres closer to the residential properties on Willow Green, the relationship with neighbouring properties remains very similar to that previously approved. The floodlighting plan showing the light spillage from the lights indicates that there will be no significant amenity issues associated with the floodlights. No further amenity issues are raised.

### **Ecology**

The Nature Conservation Officer has objected to the proposal on the grounds that there is insufficient information with the application to assess the impact upon nature conservation interests. He considers that an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, a Great Crested Newt Survey and mitigation proposals are required prior to the application being determined. No such surveys were requested at the time of either of the previous applications. The works to the existing building, car park and all weather pitch are due to commence imminently on the basis of the existing permission, and the similarities with the current proposal are sufficient to make requests for these surveys unreasonable in this case. However, the adjacent field is to undergo engineering works not previously proposed, and the Nature Conservation Officer considers that this field has more potential ecological value. Consequently, these surveys are considered to be necessary for the field, but it is recommended that these surveys are the subject of a condition that does not restrict the applicants constructing the extension, all weather pitch and car park, having regard to the circumstances outlined above.

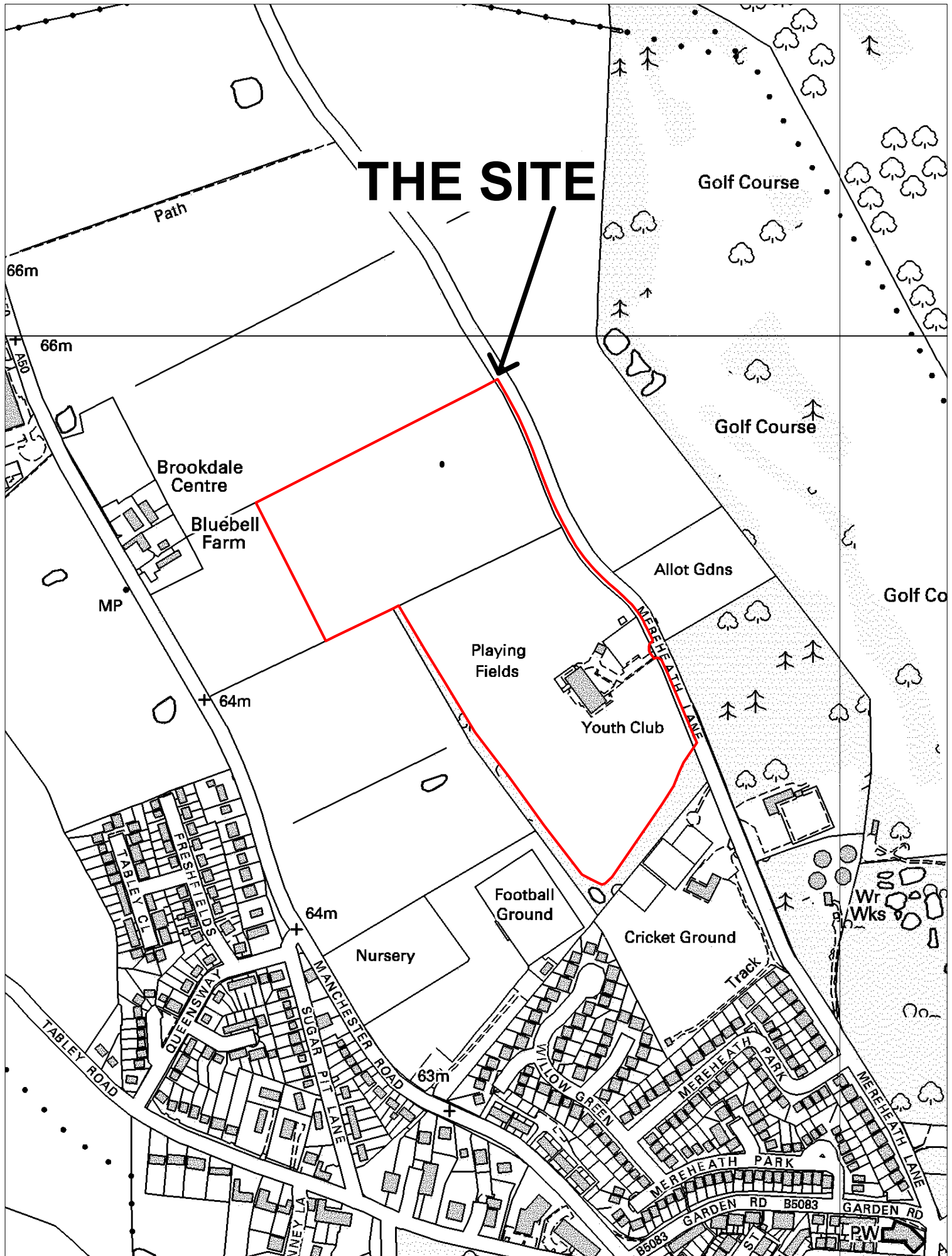
### **Other considerations**

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has recommended a condition requiring a contaminated land survey, on the basis that chemicals that could be potentially harmful may have been used on the land. There is evidence base to suggest that any contamination is present, and in these circumstances it is considered to be unreasonable to impose such a condition. Furthermore, this condition was not attached to either of the previous permissions.

The proposed all weather pitch is a reasonable distance from the nearest dwelling (approximately 150 metres). However, as with the previous permission, in order to protect residential amenity and the character of the Green Belt / rural environment, it is considered to be appropriate to restrict the hours of illumination of the proposed floodlights to 10.00pm.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

The proposal seeks to improve a long established community facility, which is considered to be an appropriate use within the Green Belt. The development involves relatively minor alterations to previously approved schemes and has an acceptable impact upon the openness and character of the Green Belt, and offers highway safety improvements by eliminating the existing on street car parking. A recommendation of approval is therefore made subject to conditions, and the satisfactory receipt of cross sections of the proposed pitches.



09/1329M EGERTON YOUTH CLUB, MERE HEATH LANE, KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE, WA16 6SL

NGR: 374,570m - 379,860m

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Application for **Full Planning**

**RECOMMENDATION : Approve subject to following conditions**

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A06EX - Materials as application
4. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
6. A04HP - Provision of cycle parking
7. A24EX - Details of colour - floodlight columns
8. A01NC - Habitats survey
9. A30HA - Protection of highway from mud and debris
10. A07HP - Drainage and surfacing of hardstanding areas
11. A01TR - Tree retention
12. Provision of car parking
13. Coach parking
14. Formation of access
15. Visibility splays
16. Short stay cycle parking
17. No gates
18. Hours of use - lighting