

Application No: 14/2671C

Location: HOLMES CHAPEL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL, SELKIRK DRIVE,
HOLMES CHAPEL, CHESHIRE, CW4 7DX

Proposal: New 3G artificial sports pitch facility

Applicant: Tony Halsall

Expiry Date: 02-Sep-2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to conditions

Main issues:

- The principle of the development
- The impact upon Recreational and Community Facilities
- The impact upon the character and appearance of the site
- The impact upon the amenity of the surrounding uses
- The impact upon Ecology
- The impact upon highway safety
- The impact upon Jodrell Bank
- The impact upon drainage and flooding

REASON FOR DEFERRAL

At Southern Planning Committee on the 30th July 2014, Members resolved to defer this planning application as insufficient information was provided regarding the proposed earth bunds.

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to Southern Planning Committee as it involves development over 1 hectare in size.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site forms part of a playing field located within the grounds of Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School. The site is within the Settlement Zone of Holmes Chapel and is designated as a Protected Area of Open Space/Recreational Facility.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Revised plans have been submitted for an artificial surfaced sports pitch with associated works including;

- Access paths
- Recreational viewing area
- Fencing
- Floodlights
- Goals
- Drainage
- External store

The proposal would measure approximately 107 metres in length, 64.5 metres in width and would be enclosed by a mixture of fencing which would range between 4.5 and 1.2 metres in height.

In addition, 3 earth bunds are proposed created from the excavated top soil, as shown on the General Arrangement plan in order to visually screen the development and provide a noise buffer.

The detail of the proposed earth bunds are as follows;

Bund 1

This bund would be located on the far western boundary of the school site. It would measure approximately 2 metres in height and positioned as such due to ecological requirements.

Bund 2

This bund would be located immediately east of the proposed sports pitch. This would be the tallest of the proposed bunds measuring approximately 2.5 metres in height. It will create a viewing platform, visual and noise buffer for/from the sports pitch and would tie in to an existing sloped adjacent to the sports hall.

Bund 3

Inset by approximately 10 metres from the eastern boundary of the school site and the boundary with the properties on Dunoon Close. This would be the smallest of the proposed bunds at 1 metre in height.

The height of this bund has been reduced during the application process in order to alleviate neighbour concerns.

It is proposed that this bund be drained and be planted with evergreen native woodland species and understory planting as detailed within the submission in order to further alleviate any noise, visual or overlooking concerns.

The original submission did not include sufficient detail regarding the proposed bunds. Furthermore, a number of minor changes to the proposal have been made during the

application process e.g. changes to the bunds, fence line, path alignment, planting and the removal of a proposed retaining wall.

RELEVANT HISTORY

11/3345C - Extension to Time Limit on Planning Permission 08/1514/FUL – Approved 30th November 2011

08/1514/FUL - The provision of an Astroturf pitch and associated works – Approved 2nd December 2008

POLICIES

National policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Local Plan policy

PS5 - Holmes Chapel Plan Strategy

GR1 - General Criteria from Development

GR2 - Design

GR6 & GR7 - Amenity & Health

GR9 - Accessibility and Parking Provision

GR20 – Public Utilities

GR21 – Flood Prevention

RC1 - Recreation and Community Facilities

RC10 - Outdoor Formal Recreational and Amenity Space Facilities

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

In view of the level of consultation already afforded to the plan-making process, together with the degree of consistency with national planning guidance, it is

appropriate to attach enhanced weight to the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version in the decision-making process.

At its meeting on the 28th February 2014, the Council resolved to approve the *Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version* for publication and submission to the Secretary of State. It was also resolved that this document be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

SC1 – Leisure and recreation
SC2 – Outdoor sports facilities
SC3 – Health and well-being
SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles
SE1 – Design
SE2 – Efficient Use of Land
SE3 – Geodiversity and Biodiversity

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Sport England – No objections, subject to a number of conditions including; the replacement siting of a cricket square; that the development is implemented in accordance with Sport England/National Governing Body Technical Design Guidance Notes; the submission of a community use agreement within 6 months of the determination; the submission of a management and maintenance plan before first use; a restriction on the use of the site to sport.

Strategic Highways Manager - No objections

Environmental Protection - No objections, subject to an 'hours of construction' informative

Manchester University (Jodrell Bank) - No comments received at time of report

United Utilities - No comments received at time of report

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL:

Holmes Chapel Parish Council – No objections

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

8 letters of support have been received for this application.

4 letter of objection have been received. The main areas of concern relate to;

- Amenity – Loss of privacy, light and increased noise concerns
- Highway safety

- Drainage and Flooding

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Design and Access Statement
Habitat Survey
Levels Plan
Lighting proposals
Badger survey
Great Crested Newt Survey
Bund detail

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site lies within the Open Countryside where, according to Policy PS8 of the Local Plan, development will only be permitted if it is for a particular type of development. One of the acceptable types of development listed is outdoor sport. As the proposed development is would be used for outdoor sports, subject to other Local Plan Policies the development is deemed to be acceptable in principle.

The relevant policies within the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version, and the NPPF, support the Local Plan policies that apply in this instance.

Recreational and Community Facilities

As the proposal is for a recreational facility in the Open Countryside, the development is subject to Policies RC1 (General) and RC4 (Countryside Recreational Facilities) of the Local Plan.

The relevant aspects of Policy RC1 advises that proposals should be of a scale and nature that is suitable for a reasonable catchment area, the development is situated where it is accessible to public transport, it would not have a detrimental impact upon nature conservation and would not result in a loss in agricultural land.

As the development would be for the use of the School, the development would have an immediate catchment area of the pupils at the school and pupils from visiting schools that come to participate in sport. Also because the development relates to a school it is accessible by public transport.

Furthermore, it is advised within the submitted Design and Access Statement that *'Not only will the new facility benefit the school, but the 3G pitch is intended to be used for community use at evenings and weekends.'*

With regards to the impact upon nature conservation, the Council's Conservation Officer has advised that he has no objections to the development subject to the mitigation measures proposed within the submitted survey's being adhered to.

As such, the development is not considered to have a detrimental impact upon any sites of nature conservation.

In relation to loss of agricultural land, because the development would replace an existing grassed sports pitch, no loss of agricultural land would occur.

As a result of the above reasons, it is considered that the proposed development would adhere with Policy RC1 of the Local Plan.

The relevant aspects of Policy RC4 advises that proposals should not unacceptably affect the amenities and character of the surrounding area, sufficient car parking should be available and access should be gained to the site from a public highway.

As there are no dwellings within the vicinity of the proposal that could view the sports pitch development, it is not considered that the neighbouring amenities of the area would be impacted. Because the development would replace an existing sports pitch, it is not considered that the character of the site would be significantly impacted.

In relation to the proposed lighting columns, the proposal seeks the inclusion of 8, Olympic standard, raise and lower columns.

Given that these columns can be lowered, and as the site is well screened to all sides by mature boundary treatment and trees, 3 proposed earth bunds and new planting, and in the absence of any objections from Environmental Protection, it is considered that the lighting proposed would be acceptable in this instance.

With regards to the parking and highways issues, because the proposal is positioned to the rear of the school away from the adopted highway, and because the development would replace an existing playing field and would therefore should not create any additional parking issues than the existing situation, it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon parking or highway safety.

As a result of the above, it is considered that the proposed development would adhere with Policy RC4 of the Local Plan.

Sport England were consulted on the proposal and have advised that they have no objections to the development, subject to a number of conditions. These conditions include; the prior submission of a plan to show the alternative location of the cricket square; the sports pitch shall be constructed in accordance with Sport England's technical guidance; the submission within 6 months of a community use agreement; the prior submission of a management and maintenance plan and a restriction on the use of the pitch as a sports facility only.

In response to these conditions;

The prior submission of a plan showing the re-positioning of the cricket square is proposed *'to protect the continuation of cricket on site from damage, loss of availability of use and to accord with the NPPF.'*

It is the decision of the applicant whether they choose to replace the existing cricket square, as such, this condition is not considered to be reasonable. It should be noted that although the cricket square is visible on the aerial photographs, it was not laid out at the time of the case officer site visit. In this case, the development would improve the quality of the sports provision on the site.

The proposed condition that the facility is to be implemented in accordance with Sport England's technical guidance shall be added as an informative.

The submission of a community agreement to be made within 6 months of the use of the site is not considered to be a necessary or reasonable condition given that the applicant has clearly stated that the facility will be used for community uses at the evenings and weekends.

The prior submission of a management and maintenance plan is not considered to be necessary as the facility would be under the control of the school, an existing responsible body.

The restriction on the use of the facility to sports only is deemed to be a necessary condition and is proposed for inclusion.

Design

Policy GR2 of the local plan states that any new development should be sympathetic to the character, appearance and form of the site in terms of its height, scale, choice of materials and external design features.

Policies SE1 and SD2 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version, support this Local Plan policy.

The proposed location of the sports facility would be sympathetic as it would be constructed to the immediate rear of an existing school and leisure centre. It is well screened on the remaining sides by mature shrubbery and trees, 3 proposed new earth bunds and be away from any public vantage points.

It is advised within the submitted design and access statement that the pitch would be surfaced in green '3G surfacing' within a 60mm pile height.

Enclosing the pitch would be twin bar weldmesh fencing with reinforced rebound mesh in green. There would be double lockable gates of the same construction and finish.

The football goals will comprise of aluminium frames and would be self-weighted with wheels.

The proposed long-jump runway would be constructed from Polymeric EDPM rubber crumb with jump indicators.

The landing pit would be clean washed silica sand with smooth rounded particles, with surrounding sand traps.

There would be 8 flood light columns.

The proposed store room building would be located on the northern side of the site and would measure approximately 6.5 metres in width, 2.9 metres in depth and would

consist of a mono-pitched roof approximately 3.5 metres in height at its maximum height.

It would have exposed brickwork walls and a seeded roof.

It is considered that this choice of materials and finish of the development sought would be appropriate for the purpose they would serve and would not appear incongruous within this well screened, countryside location. The green coloured mesh designed fencing would ensure that the development would appear largely open.

The proposed earth bunds would be formed from the excavated top soil where the facility is constructed and would be planted and seeded as detailed within the submission.

Given either the minor height of these bunds (Bund 3) or their proposed location within the site to reflect existing level changes (Bund 2), or their siting within a well screened area of the site (Bund 1), in conjunction with the fact that they would be planted, it is considered that the impact of these bunds upon the wider landscape would not be significant.

As a result of the above, it is considered that the proposal is of an acceptable design and would adhere with Policy GR2 of the Local Plan and Policies SE1 and SD2 of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version.

Amenity

Policy GR6 (Amenity and Health) of the Local Plan advises that the proposal should not have a detrimental impact upon neighbouring amenity by way of loss of privacy, loss of light, visual intrusion or environmental disturbance.

The closest residential properties to the proposed pitch facility would be those on Dunoon Close, which would be over 120 metres away.

As a result of this large distance, it is not considered that the proposal would create any issues with regards to privacy, loss of light or visual intrusion.

Environmental Protection have advised that they have no objection to the proposal subject to an hours of construction informative.

Concerns have been raised regarding the presence of the proposed earth bund to the east (Bund 3) by the occupiers of the closest dwellings.

This bund would be inset from the rear boundaries of these properties by approximately 10 metres and be approximately 22.5 metres away from the rear elevations of No.1 and No.2 Dunoon Close and 9 metres away from the side elevation of No.6 Dunoon Close.

Given the revised reduced height of Bund 3 (now 1 metre tall), the provision of a drainage scheme and a comprehensive planting schedule, it is not considered that the creation of this bund would cause any loss of privacy, light or be visually intrusive for the occupiers of these closest dwellings.

As such, it is considered that the proposal would adhere with Policy GR6 of the Local Plan.

Ecology

The application is supported by a habitat survey, a badger survey and a Great Crested Newt survey.

The council's Nature Conservation Officer has advised that protected species habitats were identified just outside of the red line boundary. The applicant has submitted a method statement of 'Reasonable Avoidance Measures' to mitigate the potential impacts.

Should the application be approved, it is recommended that the mitigation measures identified by conditioned for implementation.

Subject to this condition, it is considered that the proposed development would adhere with Policy NR2 of the Local Plan and Policy SE3 of the Local Plan Strategy-Submission Version.

Highway safety

It has already been established that because the proposal is positioned to the rear of the school away from the adopted highway, and because the development would replace an existing playing field and would therefore should not create any additional parking issues than the existing situation, it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon parking or highway safety.

The Strategic Highways Manager has advised that he has no objections to the proposed development.

As such, it is considered that the proposed development would adhere with Policy GR9 of the Local Plan.

Jodrell Bank

Manchester University have not commented at the time of report suggesting that they have no objections to the development with regards to its potential impact upon Jodrell Bank.

Drainage / Flooding

Concerns have been raised by local residents regarding drainage and flooding, particularly around the proposed earth bunds.

Given that additional planting is proposed around these bunds and that the inclusion of a French drain is now detailed for the bund closest to the properties on Dunoon Close, it is considered that the proposal would adhere with Policies GR20 and GR21 of the Local Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development is a use appropriate within the Open Countryside, would not result in a loss to an existing recreational area and its proposed siting would not cause demonstrable harm to neighbouring amenity subject to conditions. Furthermore the materials proposed in the development would respect the countryside location. As such, the proposal complies with Policies PS8 (Open Countryside), PS10 (Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope Consultation Zone), RC1 (Recreational and Community Facilities Policies (General)), RC4 (Countryside Recreational Facilities), GR1 (New Development), GR2 (Design), GR6 (Amenity and Health), GR9 (Accessibility and Parking Provision), GR20 (Public Utilities), GR21 (Flood Prevention) of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005.

The proposal would also adhere with the relevant policies within the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version and those within the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATIONS

APPROVE subject to the following conditions

- 1. Standard**
- 2. Plans**
- 3. Materials as per application**
- 4. Landscape (Implementation)**
- 5. Protected species mitigation measures**
- 6. Use restricted to sports facility**

In order to give proper effect to the Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Strategic & Economic Planning, in consultation with the Chair (or in his absence the Vice Chair) of Southern Planning Committee, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.

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