

Application No: 16/4064M

Location: EGERTON YOUTH CLUB, MEREHEATH LANE, KNUTSFORD, WA16 6SL

Proposal: Construction of parent/spectator covered standing and covered seating area to 3G pitch and pitch 7, erection of pitch lighting to pitch 7 and conversion of section of garage building to form wc facilities. (Resubmission of 16/1874M)

Applicant: Mr T O'Donnell, Egerton Football Club

Expiry Date: 14-Oct-2016

SUMMARY

The site is located within the Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Policies GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan, PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan and paragraph 89 of the NPPF set out the circumstances where development can be acceptable.

The proposals have been amended during the course of the application that result in a reduction and relocation of the spectator accommodation. The main part of this is located behind the goal close to the existing Egerton Youth Club building where its impact on openness is minimal and the level of accommodation is considered appropriate given the level of activity on the site and the level in which the adult male team plays at.

Floodlights to sporting facilities in the Green Belt are appropriate forms of development. Conditions will be applied to the planning permission requiring details of the colour that the columns will be painted and the hours in which the floodlights can be used.

To conclude, the proposals are considered to represent an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt that does not have an unacceptable impact on openness. The development raises no issues in respect of residential amenity, noise, or ecology. Some matters will be dealt with through conditions.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions.

REASON FOR REPORT

Councillor Wells-Bradshaw has requested that the application be determined by Northern Planning Committee because of the potential impact in highway safety and the impact of the floodlights on the local environment.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the erection of parent/spectator covered standing and seating areas to the existing 3G pitch and pitch 7, erection of pitch lighting to pitch 7 and conversion of section of garage building to form WC facilities.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is the site of Egerton Youth Club and its associated playing fields. The site is located on the western side of Mereheath Lane to the north of Knutsford Town Centre. The site has a large building in its centre which houses indoor sports facilities and changing rooms with a number of football pitches formally marked out around the building. One of the existing pitches is a full size all weather pitch. A parking area is located between the existing building and Mereheath Lane that contains approximately 120 parking spaces with overflow parking available on an area of 'grasscrete' that adjoins the car park.

A separate sports facility is located to the south of the site, agricultural land and the site of Knutsford FC is located to the east of the site whilst land is present to the north of the site. Mereheath Lane forms the eastern boundary of the site beyond which is Tatton Park.

RELEVANT HISTORY

16418PB – Extension to group leaders accommodation and new equipment store. Approved 18 October 1978

09/1329M – Single storey rear extension to form changing rooms/canteen, all weather pitch, extension/alteration to car parking and access alterations & change of use of neighbouring agricultural field to football/rugby pitches. Approved 12 August 2009

10/2362M – Construction of single storey extension to form external store for sports equipment. Approved 23 August 2010.

16/1874M - Construction of stands, seating area, toilet facilities and turnstiles in connection with football pitch development. Withdrawn 3 June 2016.

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs:

14. Presumption in favour of sustainable development.
69-78. Promoting healthy communities
79-92. Protecting Green Belt land

Development Plan

BE1 (Design principles for new developments)
GC1 (Green Belt – New buildings)
DC1 (High quality design for new build)
DC3 (Protection of the amenities of nearby residential properties)
DC6 (Safe and convenient access for vehicles, special needs groups and pedestrians)
DC33 (Outdoor Commercial Recreation)
DC64 (Floodlighting)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
PG1 Overall Development Strategy
PG3 Green Belt
SC1 Leisure and Recreation

Other Material Considerations:

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health – No objection. Informatives have been requested relating to the construction hours of operations and contaminated land.

Head of Strategic Infrastructure – No objection. There are no material highway implications associated with this proposal, which is designed to improve amenities for existing users and does not represent an expansion in the facilities on offer, therefore, it is not expected that there will be a significant change in site patronage during times of use.

Sport England – the proposals meet the Sport England Policy exception E2 as the proposals are ancillary to the principal use of the as playing fields and the quantity or quality of the pitches is not adversely affected.

Cheshire Brine Board – No objection

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

Knutsford Town Council - The Council objects on the grounds that the proposal fails to meet the requirements of development in the Greenbelt by failing to meet any exception policy. In the event that permission is granted the Council requests conditions for significant screening and restrictions to the hours of operation for the floodlight and that a comprehensive traffic management plan is prepared.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Objections have been received from Knutsford Football Club, Knutsford Tennis Club, South Knutsford and North Knutsford Resident's Group and the Knutsford Conservation and Heritage Group.

The points of objection relate to the following;

- The proposal is 'quasi-commercial' with the aim of expanding the adult facilities.
- The club want to attract players from outside of Knutsford and youth and adult football is already well catered for in Knutsford.
- The youth club origins of the operations on the site are no longer adhered to.
- Car parking on the site is limited.
- Impact on highway capacity in the area.
- The spectator numbers outlined in the supporting information are inflated.
- Lack of consultation carried out by the applicant.
- The level of floodlighting is justified for youth football.
- The site is contrary to Green Belt Policy.
- Impact of the floodlights on local ecology

OFFICER APPRAISAL

- Principle of Development – Green Belt
- Highways Issues
- Observations on Representations
- Conclusions

Principle of Development

The site is located within the Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Policies GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan, PG3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan and paragraph 89 of the NPPF set out the circumstances where development can be acceptable and these are;

- i. buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- ii. provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- iii. the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- iv. the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- v. limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or*
- vi. limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.*

Part (ii) clearly permits appropriate facilities for outdoor sport as long as the openness of the Green Belt is preserved and the proposal does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The key test is whether or not the proposals are appropriate facilities and do they impact on the openness of the Green belt?

Spectator Accommodation

The plans have been amended by reducing the amount of covered spectator accommodation down to approximately 200 rather than 300 and the spectator area is now proposed to be located behind the goal close to the existing building.

From the details submitted with the application the football club attracts a significant number of visitors, especially at weekends and to a more limited extent on weekday evenings for training sessions. The adult male team currently plays in the Cheshire League Division 1 whilst the adult female team currently plays in the North West Regional Women's League. At present none of these leagues have any requirement for spectator accommodation. Should the adult male team achieve promotion to the next league the club will be required to provide 100 covered spaces for spectators, 50 of which must be seated.

It is considered that the level of spectator accommodation is now appropriate following the reduction outlined above. Whilst it exceeds the minimum requirement for the league above which the club currently plays the spectator areas will also be available for parents during times when the pitch is in use for training and junior matches.

The two covered areas on the 3g pitch are considered to be appropriate given the limited amount of shelter they provide. This pitch is likely to be used most especially during more inclement weather given the playing surface of the pitch and the fact this pitch is already floodlit.

Sport England have offered no objection to the proposals as they meet exception E2 as the proposals are ancillary to the existing playing field use and do not affect the quality in provision on offer at the site.

The proposed shelters providing the spectator accommodation are not prominent in scale; they have a maximum height of 3.3 metres at their highest point. In terms of pitch 7, the covered accommodation is located behind the goal close to the Egerton Youth Club building, whilst those around the 3g pitch are located separate from each other and have a very limited visual impact. The views of these structures will be very limited from outside of the overall site. It is not considered that these structures will have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the Green Belt and comply with Local Plan Policy GC1 and paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

Floodlights

The proposed floodlights are on 6 columns that are 15 metres in height with 3 columns being located on either side of pitch 7.

Floodlights are appropriate facilities in the Green Belt as they support the outdoor recreation use of the site. The columns do not have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the Green Belt. They are narrow and spaced some 30 metres apart along each side of the pitch.

A condition will be included on the decision notice requiring the details of the colour the columns will be painted. The floodlights will not have a significant visual impact on the character of the landscape nor will they have any impact on any protected species or local wildlife. It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy DC64.

Conversion of Building to W/C and other matters

As far as appropriateness is concerned, the conversion of the existing garages into WC facilities is considered appropriate. It involves the conversion of an existing building and provides an appropriate facility to support the existing use of the site.

Dug outs are proposed at the side of the pitch. These are small structures that one would expect to be present at a football club operating at this level. These are therefore considered to be appropriate facilities.

To conclude, the proposals are considered to represent an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt that does not have an unacceptable impact on openness. The proposal does not conflict with the 5 purposes for including land within the Green Belt and does preserve openness, which is the main characteristic of Green Belts. Therefore due to the nature of the proposal it is considered that this accords with Green Belt policy and is acceptable in principle.

Residential Amenity

Local Plan Policy DC3 seeks to ensure that new development does not significantly injure the amenities of adjoining or nearby residential property due to amongst other things, loss of privacy, overbearing effect, loss of sunlight and daylight, noise, traffic generation, access and car parking.

The application site is a considerable distance from any residential properties and the extended hours of use of the playing fields that the floodlights will allow will not result in any noise issues for nearby properties. Likewise the floodlights are located at a distance that would ensure no light spillage will occur to the detriment of residential amenity.

The floodlights are designed to ensure that only the football pitch itself is lit and that light spillage is kept to an absolute minimum. Therefore any impact on residential amenity will be low. In any event a condition restricting the hours the floodlights can be used will be included on the decision notice to ensure they are not left on late into the evening or result in a level of activity that would create an unacceptable impact on residential amenity or ecology.

The proposals meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy DC3.

Highways

The proposal does not result in the expansion of the facilities on offer nor will it result in any significant increase in the level of activity that takes place on the site. The Council's Strategic Infrastructure Manager has raised no objections to the proposals on this basis. As such the proposals are considered acceptable in highway terms.

COMMENTS ON REPRESENTATIONS

Most of the points of objection have been addressed in the main body of the report whilst the remaining points are addressed below;

- The proposal is a 'quasi-commercial' with the aim of expanding the adult facilities.
- The club want to attract players from outside of Knutsford and youth and adult football is already well catered for in Knutsford.
- The youth club origins of the operations on the site are no longer adhered to.
- Lack of consultation carried out by the applicant.

The above points are not material planning considerations in determining this planning application.

- The level of floodlighting is not justified for youth football.

Whilst this may be factually correct it is not relevant in determining the application. The level of floodlighting has been assessed above and is considered to be appropriate.

- Impact of the floodlights on local ecology

The floodlights will not harm any protected species on the basis they are not switched on too late into the night. A condition will be included on the decision notice requiring that the floodlights shall not be used after 22:00 each night. This is consistent with the restriction on the floodlights for the existing 3g pitch.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposals are considered to be an appropriate form of development as set out in paragraph 89 of the NPPF and do not have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The site is remote from residential properties and the level of activity on site is not expected to increase as a result of the proposals so the amenity on the nearest residential properties will be minimal. The proposals will not result in an increase in vehicles visiting the site so there will be no detrimental impact in terms of car parking and highway safety. Accordingly, the scheme is found to accord with relevant local and national policy and is found to be sustainable having regard to social, environmental and economic considerations.

RECOMMENDATION

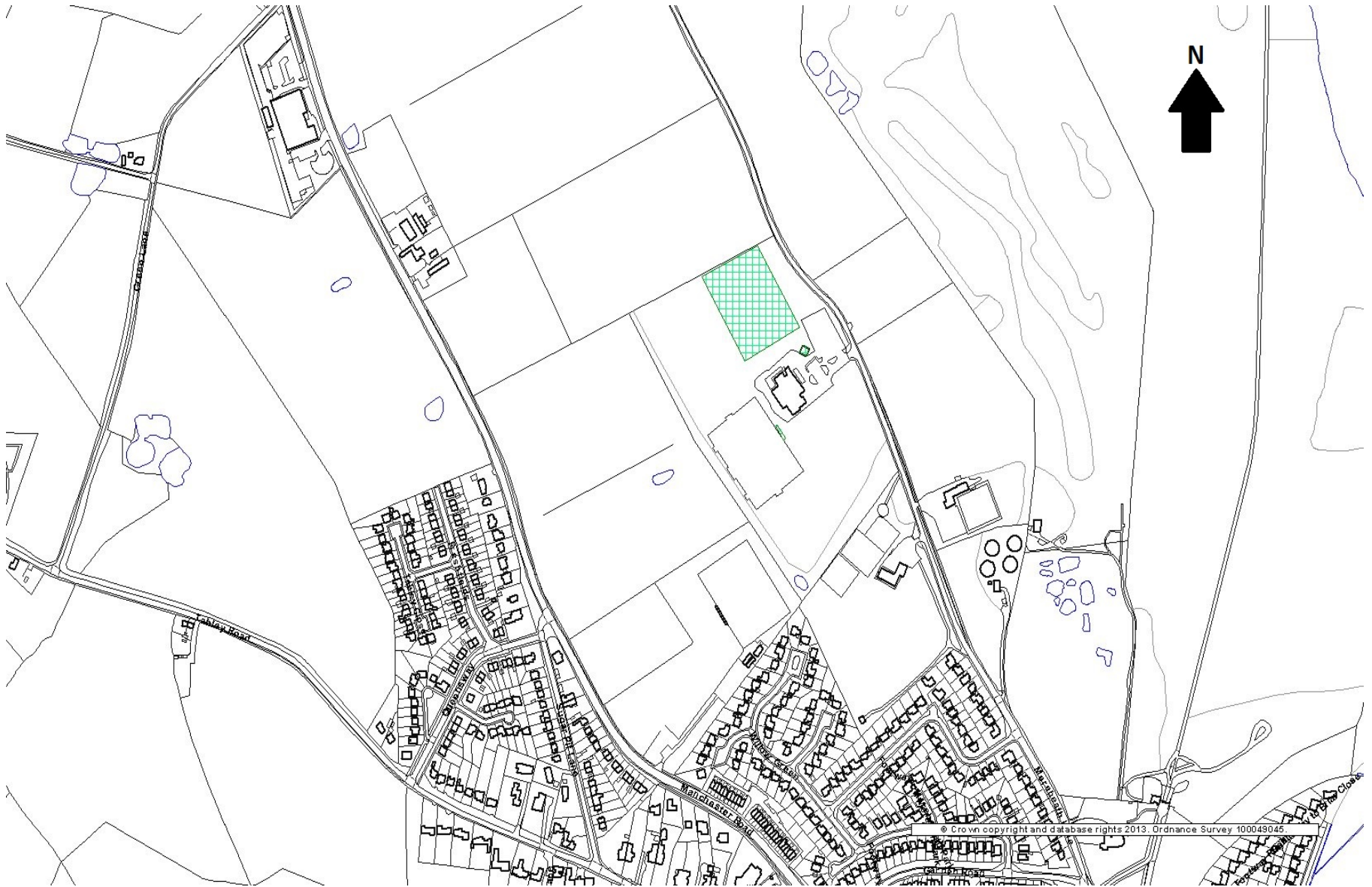
The application is recommended for approval subject to the following conditions:

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions / informatives / planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning (Regulation) delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Commencement of development
2. Development in accord with approved plans
3. Lighting details to be approved
4. Hours



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