

Appendix 2

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SCDC Planing Committee,
South Cambs Hall,
Cambourne, // South Cambridgeshire.

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

Ref: S/2084/16/FL: Howes Close Sports Ground, Girton

You will I am sure consider carefully the concerns of residents; concerns which I share. However, I would ask you to focus on the issue of the harm to the Green Belt.

Officers acknowledge a significant detriment to the Green Belt if this proposal goes ahead¹. They are clear that it ‘would not preserve the openness of this particular section of the Green Belt’². Indeed, if you imagine a 2.5m barrier of fast-growing willow across the width of the site, opaque mesh fencing, hard standing for 54 cars and a two-storey pavilion, it is easy to see why.

The NPPF is clear. §§87–89 state that such development should not be approved ‘except in very special circumstances’ which means that potential harm ‘is clearly outweighed by other considerations’. A sports facility can be an exception only if ‘it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Officers are clear this application does not meet these criteria.

And this is not just Green Belt. This is the Girton Gap. This is that tremendously precious piece of Green Belt which separates us from the City and which creates and preserves our status as a village in South Cambridgeshire. In the research for our Village Plan 92% of respondents thought the green belt around Girton should be the same or wider. Only 2% thought it could be

¹Cf ‘the proposed development will have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt in the immediate area of the site, but advise that the impact on the wider Green Belt will be minimal, **with the exception of the lighting proposed**’ §1, my emphasis; ‘Officers are of the view that the larger replacement pavilion building, additional parking area, and the introduction of two pitches which will be enclosed by fencing and floodlighting, would not preserve the openness of this particular section of the Green Belt. Although the fencing will be open-mesh style it can have a relatively solid appearance’ §51; 108. Officers have concluded that the proposal is inappropriate development by definition as it will not preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with the purposes of including land within it’ §108; and elsewhere.

²§51.

narrower. Allow this application, and we shall be an urban development; the City will envelop Girton.

So what 'very special circumstances' are there? Chapter 7 of the Planning Statement (chapter 7), offers 4 arguments:

- 1 Insufficient alternatives and pressing need for sports pitches
- 2 Health and social benefits
- 3 Educational benefits for students
- 4 The University's need to compete³.

We may add that officers note 'It is recognised that the enhanced sporting facilities that the development will provide benefit to local groups, in addition to persons that have connections with ARU'⁴. But this is not the case: ARU is clear that the facility will only be open to associates of the University and at restricted times.

Argument 1 does not match the NPPF criteria, which **require** the continued openness of the Green Belt; there is no let-out because an alternative space cannot be found.

It is a little hard to argue significant social benefits while emphasising the significant restrictions required. No doubt there will be an application for variation of conditions at least when Darwin Green is developed; after all it is paying for it⁵. The existing floodlights had restrictions lifted within a year of installation. However, that cannot justify the fact that this development as applied for will not provide general health and social benefits. So argument 2 falls.

Arguments 3 and 4 apply exclusively to a City university. It is surely not the responsibility of South Cambridgeshire to destroy its precious Green Belt for the sake of an external institution. I appeal to you to reject this application

Yours sincerely,



Douglas de Lacey, Member for Girton.

³Cf §109.

⁴§2.

⁵§41. Whilst it is not material to the determination of this application, following comments from local residents and the City Council, it has been explained that funding for this development will be contributed from the Section 106 for the Darwin Green development