

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee 7<sup>th</sup> June 2006  
**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/0636/06/F - Fulbourn  
Clubhouse, Football Pitch, Grandstand, Car Park, Access Road, Floodlights and  
Landscaping at Land off Balsham Road  
for Fulbourn Institute Football Club**

**Recommendation: Refusal  
Date for Determination: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2006 (Major Development)**

### **Departure**

**Members will visit the site on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006.**

### **Site and Proposal**

1. The site measures 2.8 hectares and comprises two agricultural fields which have been left to fallow. The land is relatively flat. Both fields have hedges to the boundaries, although the boundary between the two fields also contains a number of large trees and the western boundary of the northern field is relatively open to the recreation ground. Adjacent properties to the north, on Stonebridge Lane comprise a mix of hedges, post and rail fences, panel fence. Three properties have no boundary treatment at all. It is within the Green Belt and outside of the village framework.
2. This full planning application, registered on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006, seeks permission for a football ground for Fulbourn Institute Football Club. The club has been promoted to the Ridgeons league, which requires improved facilities. The proposals are comprehensive and include access off Balsham Road through the southern-most field; a car park with 83 spaces, including 6 disabled parking spaces; a football pitch with 6no. 15m high floodlight columns (these can be demountable); 3m high wire mesh security fences with a green powder coated finish to the perimeter of the ground on the north (where not adjacent bordering residential properties), western and south boundaries; a club house measuring 9.25m by 19.3m and 5m to the ridge that will provide changing facilities and a modest area for meetings, refreshments and visitors (total floor area of 178m<sup>2</sup>); and a stand measuring 22.5m long by 2.97m wide and 2.76m high.
3. The application is accompanied by supporting information explaining:
  - a) Fencing is required and meets the Ridgeons League requirements, a field hedge to the northeast means that a fence to this boundary is not required.
  - b) Changing room dimensions are as required by the League, which requires a separate room for directors/ committee members in which refreshments can be served. This should be able to accommodate a minimum of 16 people but on occasions 25 people.
  - c) The ground will only be used for Ridgeons League matches.
  - d) The number of home games each season would be 20, plus any possible cup games. It is anticipated that 10 would be Saturday afternoon games, kicking off

at 3.00pm needing floodlights. Up to 7 could be evening games, kicking off at 7.45pm.

- e) Average attendance figures at present at 154 for home games. The highest anticipated is between 250 and 300.
- f) All training would be carried out on the MUGA located on the recreation ground.
- g) To integrate the facilities with the recreation ground a new pedestrian link is proposed.

### **Planning History**

- 4. There is no relevant planning history for this site.

### **Planning Policy**

- 5. **Policy GB2** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (Local Plan) adopted 2004, and **Policy P9/2a** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (Structure Plan) 2003 seek to restrict inappropriate forms of development within the Green Belt. Appropriate development can include 'buildings providing essential facilities for outdoor sports and recreation or other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with Green belt purposes.' **Policy GB3** of the Local Plan states that where development is 'not inappropriate' it will be located within or adjoining existing complexes or entail the re-development of redundant buildings to protect the rural nature and openness of the Green Belt'.
- 6. **Policy GB5** of the Local Plan states that the 'Council will not support proposals for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation in the Green belt which require substantial buildings, car parks, floodlights or which frequently attract large numbers of participants or spectators or which would result in the loss of the best and most versatile grades of agricultural land'.
- 7. **Policy RT1** of the Local Plan states that, in considering applications for the development of recreational and tourist facilities, the District Council will have regard to the need for such facilities and the benefits which might accrue. Therefore the District Council will resist any proposals which would:
  - a) Not be in close proximity to and not be well related with an established settlement and its built up area;
  - b) By reason of its scale, form, design and materials of the proposal, together with any associated development such as other buildings and structures would create an intrusive feature in the landscape or surrounding area;
  - c) Generate significant motorised traffic movements;
  - d) Have inadequate provision for parking and manoeuvring of cars and service vehicles to the District Councils standards;
  - e) Not provide appropriate provision for screening and to minimise the visual intrusion into neighbouring development and the countryside.
- 8. **Policy P4/1** of the Structure Plan states that new or improved recreation development should:
  - a) Maintain or increase employment opportunities;
  - b) Meet the needs of local communities as well as visitors;
  - c) Be accessible by a choice of sustainable transport modes;
  - d) Protect or improve the local environment, landscape and residential amenity;
  - e) Strengthen and diversify the local economy, particularly in Peterborough and North Cambridgeshire.

9. **Policy TP1** of the Local Plan states that the Council will seek, through its decisions on planning applications, to promote more sustainable transport choices, to improve access to major trip generators by non-car modes, and to reduce the need to travel, especially by car. To give effect to these aims, planning permission will not be granted for developments likely to give rise to more than a small-scale increase in travel demands unless the site has (or will attain) a sufficient standard of accessibility to offer an appropriate choice of travel by public transport or other non-car travel modes.
10. **Policy P8/1** of the Structure Plan relates to Sustainable Development and the links between Land Use and Transport. This states that new development should provide for the need of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport uses as well as an appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise safety.
11. **Policy EN9** of the Local Plan seeks to safeguard identified sites of nature conservation. Similarly, policy **P7/2** of the Structure Plan seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
12. **EN28** of the Local Plan limits development that will affect the setting of Listed Buildings. It includes a requirement to submit illustrative and technical material to allow the impact of proposals affecting a Listed Building, its curtilage and wider setting.
13. Policy **ES6** of the Local Plan seeks to apply appropriate planning conditions to minimise the impact of noise and pollution on noise-sensitive development arising from any new recreational activities.
14. Policy **P1/2** of the Structure Plan sets out environmental restrictions on development. In particular, 'Development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location'.
15. Policy **P1/3** of the Structure Plan requires a high standard of design and sustainability for all new development including:
  - a) minimising the need to travel and reducing car dependency;
  - b) providing a sense of place; and
  - c) making efficient use of energy and resources.

### **Consultations**

16. **Fulbourn Parish Council** recommends refusal. It comments:
  - a) The proposals contravene policies GB2, GB3 and RT1 of the Local Plan;
  - b) It has taken into account the comments from residents of Stonebridge lane, Impett's Lane, Balsham Road, Barnsfield and Jeeves Acre.
  - c) The Parish Council has received letters of support from other areas of the village (95 letters are enclosed).
  - d) The proposed access road from Balsham Road to the site and associated car parking would lead to increased traffic flow. There is an improved car park for the recreation ground at Home End.
  - e) Questions have been raised about what would happen to the site if the Football Club is relegated. Any such application should be limited to the use for the Ridgeons League matches and the land restored to its current state should this not be the case in the future.

- f) The proposal for around 7 matches of the matches having 7.45pm kick off would lead to severe loss of amenity to the neighbouring properties due to noise and light pollution.
17. The **Environment Agency** advises that the site is a low area of flood risk and that the Local Planning Authority is to assess drainage details, however a surface water condition should suffice.
18. **Sport England** comments:
- a. Sport England has a longstanding commitment to the land-use and spatial planning system and has published ‘Planning for Sport and Active Recreation: Objectives and Opportunities’ (Interim Statement 2005) which sets out our policy framework in responding to planning consultations. Planning Policy Objective 7 of that document supports the development of new facilities or the enhancement of existing facilities that will secure opportunities to take part in sport.
  - b. The proposal relates to the construction of a new clubhouse, football pitch, grandstand, car park, floodlighting and access road for Fulbourn Institute Football Club, who currently play on the adjacent Fulbourn Recreation Ground.
  - c. The upgraded facilities are necessary to allow the club to progress through the football “pyramid” system and satisfy the requirements of the National Ground Grading System.
  - d. I have consulted with the local and regional FA development officers. They have confirmed that the applicants are a thriving club who make provision for players from U6 level to senior status. However, there is a “bottleneck” in terms of progression for the more talented senior players, given the lack of a permanent ground that satisfies the requirements of the Eastern Counties Football League. The proposals are therefore crucial for the long-term development of the club in maintaining high levels of participation amongst the young people of the village and surrounding area.
  - e. It is also worth noting that the development will have no adverse impact on the existing adjacent playing fields at Fulbourn Recreation Ground, which will remain in community use. This site is a high quality multi-sport environment, catering not only for football but also cricket, tennis and bowls in the local area. The multi-use games area on the site has been publicly funded by the Football Foundation, an indication of the excellent work the football club has put in to develop participation in junior and senior football in the area.
  - f. The proposal has been developed with the help of the FA and has therefore been designed to meet technical requirements within the football pyramid system with regard to enclosure, spectator provision, floodlighting etc.
  - g. Sport England remains committed to raising opportunities for all sectors of the population to start, stay and succeed in sport at every level, and the development of these facilities is a clear example of where a club is delivering against these objectives, but requires to develop its facilities if it is to continue to attract new players to the sport.
  - h. For the above reasons, Sport England is very much in support of this application, which conforms to the Sport England policy referred to above. We hope that

South Cambridgeshire District Council is able to support the application accordingly.

19. The **Local Highways Authority** comment that:
  - a) The geometry of the proposed junction and access road is suitable to accommodate cars and vans only. If however, it is proposed that coaches would visit the site then the access arrangement is not acceptable. The applicant/agent should confirm if this is the case.
  - b) A 2.0m wide footway must be provided from the existing to the north up to and including the new access within the layby. Such footway to be completed prior to the use of the new facilities commencing.
  - c) The layby should be resurfaced from the junction with Balsham Road up to and including the new access road junction. The specification to be agreed with the Divisional Maintenance Engineer. Such work to be completed prior to the use of the facilities commencing.
  - d) It is strongly recommended that the layout plan be amended to include notes relating to the provision of the footway detailed above together with the improvement to the surfacing of the layby.
  
20. The **Countryside Access Team** at Cambridgeshire County Council has no objection to the proposed development but draws the applicant's attention to a number of points relating to points of law that should be added as informatives if approved.
  
21. The **Ecology Officer** comments that the site is less than 400m from the Fulbourn Fen SSSI, furthermore the Wildlife Trust manages nearby woodland as a nature reserve. The applicant must demonstrate how the proposals will not cause disturbance to the SSSI and nature reserve. Policy EN9 of the Local Plan applies. Furthermore, the application should assess the current biodiversity value of the site and present opportunities for biodiversity gain e.g. green roofs could be provided upon the stands, deeper lengths of boundary planting are required, nest box provision. He questions how the grass paddock will be managed.
  
22. The **Sports Development Officer** comments:
  - a. I understand that you have consulted both with Cambridgeshire Football Association and with Sport England. Both bodies have replied to you positively and in favour of the Fulbourn development off Balsham Road. I echo all their comments and fully support the project for the benefit of Sports Development within the district.
  - b. After looking at the plans provided by yourself, I believe that the club has met the minimum criteria set out for them to remain in the higher league and to develop in to the future.
  - c. After achieving third place this season, they will become local heroes which will help bring the community together and encourage young local players to play. South Cambs. already has one of the highest team generation rates in the Country but has not been good when it comes to providing exit routes for the more talented players. To enable talented players to stay within their local club helps with retention of both club players and coaches at all levels.
  - d. If Fulbourn can provide football for all ages and levels they will not only help get people active but will help to reduce anti-social behaviour, reduce obesity levels and mental health problems amongst teenagers within their community.

23. **Cambridgeshire Football Association** supports the proposals as the National Governing Body of all football in Cambridgeshire:
- a. Fulbourn Football Club is a leader in the successful development of the local community, adding real value to the community feel good factor, community safety and health for men, women, boys and girls, whatever ability. But, the sustainability of their current leadership and position in the community is dependent upon upgrading their facilities along the lines of this planning application.
  - b. Our position of support is based on our national Long Term Development Pathway. Fulbourn is a massive success in terms of creating and sustaining participation amongst young people and we through the Football Foundation have supported a number of grant applications in partnership with the Parish Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.
  - c. South Cambridgeshire has a very high level of football participation but very few clubs at the non league pyramid level in comparison to say Hunts DC, Mid Beds DC or Mid Suffolk DC and the effect of this is that a progression bottleneck has been created and this will probably be exasperated through the planned population increase in the Regional Plan.
  - d. In Fulbourn we have seen the development of sport, adding positive value to community safety and health, and the football club have been a major component of this development. The football club are very well organised and have achieved the Football Association's Charter Standard for quality at both adult and youth level, for men and women, boys and girls, whatever ability.
  - e. They have a number of players coming through the system from U6 to U18 and into adult and this has generated a most successful team that has been the top team in the Cambridgeshire League in recent times. The club then last season took the enormous step to move into the Eastern Counties League which requires a number of ground facilities including floodlights as part of the National Ground Grading System for non league football. The Eastern Counties League allowed the club some flexibility in meeting the ground grading conditions but need to see progress towards compliance within a short timescale. The club managed to enclose the ground etc. and satisfy the league that they are progressing using temporary arrangements, but this project enables them to sustain their status in the Eastern Counties League where in this their first season they finished third in their division.
  - f. To retain their position in the Eastern Counties League the club need to develop a facility that meets the ground grading criteria and having considered all alternatives this application represents the most appropriate proposition and we would hope that it will realise the support of the Parish Council to the benefit of the community as a whole.
  - g. As an example of best practice that the Parish Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council could consider is that at Histon whereby the community facilities sit alongside a non league club as an outstanding example of how the two can work together in partnership to the advantage of the whole community.

24. The comments of the **Trees and Landscape Officer, Conservation Officer, Environmental Health Officer** and **Cultural Services Manager** are awaited and will be reported verbally.
25. The **Campaign to Protect Rural England** has written objecting to the proposals on grounds that the site is in the Green Belt. It recognises that the Green Belt has a recreation function, based on outdoor activities and formal playing fields/pitches and that essential small-scale buildings which are necessary to the activity such as changing rooms, are acceptable. However, playing fields and small scale buildings do alter the rural character of the area. It is concerned that spectator stand could 'grow' into a fully fledged stadium and this would be unacceptable. It is also unhappy about the floodlighting columns which would be obtrusive in this rural landscape even when turned off. It urges the application be refused, unless there are exceptional over-riding grounds, as the proposal would have an adverse impact on the openness and rural character of the Green Belt.
26. **The Wildlife Trust** is concerned that due to the proximity of the development to Fulbourn Fen Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve and Fulbourn Fen SSSI, insufficient consideration has been given to potential wildlife impacts. Its main concerns are the effect of lighting on these wildlife areas, as artificial lighting is known to have an effect on invertebrates and birds. As a minimum it would expect:
- a) Analysis to determine the levels of light reaching wildlife sites including cumulative impacts of the floodlights and any other lighting associated with the development.
  - b) Directional lighting should be used to reduce the amount of light reaching the wildlife sites.
  - c) Consideration should be given to the lighting levels. The League Regulations state that the minimum level should be 120 lux, yet the proposals are for a total luminance of 228 lux. Is such a level of lighting necessary? Reduction could reduce the effects on wildlife.
27. As the proposals stand, with the ground in use for around 20 – 25 matches a season, the wildlife impacts are potentially not that significant. However, if usage were to increase, the effects on wildlife would be a major concern as it would increase the lighting levels, number of spectators and noise pollution with associated increase in noise to the Nature Reserve. Future usage should be limited. An assessment of wildlife impacts is required prior to planning permission being granted. If it is found that greater level of use would have negative environmental impacts, an upper limit on the level of usage should be agreed at this stage to prevent damaging expansion in the future.

It is also concerned about the potential hydrological impacts on Fulbourn Fen Nature Reserve. Prior to a decision being made an assessment should be undertaken of hydrological impacts on nearby wildlife sites.

### **Representations**

28. Fulbourn Institute Football Club has provided additional information in support of the application. This confirms:
- a) The club has looked at four alternative sites in the area including land off Wilbraham Road, Station Road, Babraham Road and Fulbourn Hospital. All four sites are either in the Green Belt or unavailable in the timescale set by the Ridgeons League.

- b) The recreation ground would have been ideal for the club, however the site was deemed too cramped and too close to housing after consultation between Fulbourn Parish Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- c) The Ridgeons League informed the club that the car park at Home End is too far away from the site, therefore a separate access would be needed with a car park on site.
- d) There is no existing floodlighting that needs to be removed. The proposed floodlights can be demountable but requires extra equipment for this purpose costing £2,500 approximately.
- e) Matches on Saturdays start at 3.00pm, therefore between November and the end of February floodlights are needed. Evening matches start at 7.45pm and finish at approximately 9.30pm and there would be around seven matches starting at this time.
- f) All aspects of the development were discussed with Officers prior to submission.
- g) This location is suitable for the club and subject to agreeing a lease is available.
- h) The club decided to make a step up into the Ridgeons League after winning two successive Cambs. Kershaw League titles. The players are the key to our success plus good management. The Manager has brought these players through from Colts level and the majority of them are from Fulbourn and the surrounding area. They finished third place in their first season in the Ridgeons League which would have given an automatic promotion to the Premier Division. This is why we need a ground, otherwise players will have to move elsewhere to realise their ambitions and they want to stay together.
- i) The existing way the team play has created a lot of interest in the village and we regularly get around 120 spectators attending home games. The opportunity to play at this level has put Fulbourn on the map and raised the profile of the village.

29. Six letters of support from local residents living at 4 Wrights Close, 5 Balsham Road, 2 The Croft, 10 The Croft, 13 the Maples and a member of the football club who lives in Newmarket have been received. Comments relevant to the planning application include:

- a. The new ground would benefit a large number of villagers including players, supporters and youngsters coming through the Colts teams.
- b. The club has been playing on the recreation ground with very little inconvenience to uninterested people and has attracted good levels of support.
- c. The Club is well known throughout East Anglia and is constantly being asked about its plans for a new ground.
- d. Most of the players have local ties and younger players aspire to join the first team.
- e. This provides an outlet for people, who otherwise might be hanging around taking drugs and committing acts of vandalism as some do at present.
- f. The facilities proposed would set a foundation for the future of football in the village for years to come.
- g. It would be a real shame if they miss out on promotion having done so well.
- h. People who buy houses near to recreation grounds should expect some level of noise.
- i. Football and cricket have been played at the recreation ground for many years.
- j. There are already floodlights at the recreation ground, which are in regular use. The floodlights would only be used during evening matches and during darker months. The Parish has applied to extend the hours of the floodlights, is this light pollution not the same as that now proposed?
- k. The majority of traffic has come from the A11 this season and nobody has commented that there has been a significant increase. Many of the clubs in the league travel by coach so increase in traffic is not a real issue.

- l. People choose what activities within the village to support and therefore that it will not benefit all villagers is not a consideration.
  - m. The club has generated a fell good factor in the village with 130 plus attending the recreation grounds on Saturdays.
- 30. James Paice MP has written enclosing a letter of objection from the occupants of 2 Barnsfield, Fulbourn; but does not express a view on the proposals stating that this a matter for the Council.
- 31. Twenty-three representations objecting to the proposals have been received from residents at 1, 3 and 4 Barnsfield; 1 – 4 Jeeves Acre; 16 –17 Balsham Road; High Field Farmhouse, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 Stonebridge Lane; 14 and 24 Impetts Lane; and a resident of Cherry Hinton. These raise the following issues:
- 32. **Green Belt**
  - a. Impact upon the Green Belt's open nature, rural character and visual amenity.
  - b. Contrary to Green Belt policies.
  - c. It is not essential to the location as other facilities are available in the Cambridge area.
- 33. **Historic Buildings and Conservation**
  - a) Adjacent to a Conservation Area.
  - b) Loss of historic views of Stonebridge Lane.
  - c) Impact on an important historic area, as acknowledged by a recent English Heritage project with Fulbourn Village History Society which recorded properties in Stonebridge Lane for exhibit.
  - d) An incongruous sports facility that makes a mockery of Conservation measures.
- 34. **Wildlife**
  - a) The site is adjacent to a nature reserve and SSSI – harm to ecology and natural habitat through noise, fumes and light pollution.
  - b) Lack of any Environmental Study to address bio-diversity issues.
  - c) No suggestion of how hedges will be managed.
  - d) Lack of Environmental Statement setting out the impacts and mitigation measures.
  - e) Small impact on carbon emissions and subsequent impact on climate change.
  - f) Loss of grassland and hedgerow habitats.
- 35. **Highways and car parking**
  - a) Access off Balsham Road is dangerous due to the national speed limit and poor visibility.
  - b) Frequent accidents including two recent fatalities.
  - c) Conflicts with the access point to Jeeves Acre and Barnsfield.
  - d) Loss of amenity to Jeeves Acre and Barnsfield due to the noise and disturbance resulting from the use of the access.
  - e) Width of access is insufficient for emergency service vehicles to access Jeeves Acre and Barnsfield if the road is also being used for the ground.
  - f) Potential overspill parking in the layby adding to loss of residential amenity and hazards, especially in the area of the public footpath.
  - g) Lack of detail for the access.
  - h) Existing parking is available at the recreation ground.

- i) Inadequate consideration given to pedestrian safety, as many children use the public footpath to access the recreation ground safely.
- j) Inadequate parking provision if it is proposed to have 300 spectators at some games.
- k) Two footpaths are required to the frontage with Balsham Road.
- l) Alternative access to Balsham Road could be achieved by widening the footpath to the nature reserve. This is on a straight stretch of road.

**36. Flood Lights**

- a) Major visual intrusion into the countryside and to residential properties of 6 floodlights.
- b) Introduces light to a poorly lit fringe area to the village.
- c) Loss of residential amenity due to light spillage and would enable evening games with increased noise and disturbance.
- d) Contrary to PPS8.

**37. Stands**

- a) These will not look like agricultural buildings.
- b) They are out of keeping with the area.
- c) They are obtrusive and therefore contrary to PPG2.

**38. Club House**

- a) It is not Fulbourn Institute Football Club's intention to transfer its headquarters to the new pitch, as it is to be located at the new club house on the recreation ground.
- b) A committee room is not required as these facilities are already available at the recreation ground.
- c) Design is utilitarian and characterless and appears to be isolated urbanising development in the countryside and as such is harmful to the character of the area.
- d) Townley Hall is a two-minute walk away.
- e) These proposals will take business away from existing facilities at the village hall.
- f) It will duplicate existing facilities.

**39. Security Fence**

- a) Inappropriate to an open area and detracts from the Green Belt.
- b) Impact on movements of foxes, badgers, Munkjack Deer.

**40. Alternative Sites**

- a) There are other stadiums in Cambridgeshire area that could be shared, which are already in the Ridgeons League.
- b) The transitory life in football leagues means that the future of the site if the club is relegated would be in question.
- c) Adequate facilities already exist at the football club.
- d) Other sites are available which would have less serious impacts on residential amenity and the setting of the village.

41. **Residential amenity**

- a) Proximity to houses on Barnsfield, Jeeves Acre, Stonebridge Lane and Balsham Road mean that amenity will be harmed due to noise from traffic and crowds.
- b) Houses on Stonebridge Lane abut the site.
- c) Planting to Stonebridge Lane would not sufficiently mitigate harm caused.
- d) Light pollution.

42. **Other**

- a) It will introduce what is essentially commercial development into the Green Belt.
- b) It will only benefit a small proportion of the population.
- c) It will harm community cohesion due to disagreement about the benefits.
- d) Insufficient benefit to justify the harm to Green Belt.
- e) Loss of agricultural land.
- f) Proposals do not include communal sports resources and other than members of the club will not benefit the community at large.
- g) Development of the site will make it easier for the land owner to get planning permission for residential development in the future.
- h) Access has only been proposed off Balsham Road to make it easier for the land to be re-developed in the future, as has been discussed publicly by the land owner at Parish Council meetings and is "common knowledge."
- i) The proposals exceed FA and League requirements for sports provision within the village.
- j) The facilities should not be sub-let out of season and permission should be personal to the Club.
- k) If promoted it is likely that they will require additional development.

**Planning Comments – Key Issues**

43. There are a number of issues to be considered and interests to be balanced in considering this application. These include weighing the requirement for improved sports facilities in order for the club to progress against the impact upon neighbouring residential properties, the surrounding countryside, Green Belt, sites of wildlife importance and the public highway.

***Green Belt***

44. National, County Structure Plan and Local Plan Policy GB2 do provide scope of sporting development within the Green Belt, where it is 'essential for outdoor sports' and it 'preserves the openness of the Green Belt'. This is expanded upon in Policy GB5 which sets out limitations that the Council will apply to such developments. In this application the proposals do include some buildings. Although these are not considered to be 'substantial' the applicants have not fully identified why existing facilities upon the recreation ground could not meet the facilities required for committee members. I do not consider there to be any particular issue in terms of the Green Belt with the proposed stands or changing facilities. These are modest structures and will not significantly impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.
45. Policy GB5 does seek to limit development that will result in substantial car parks and floodlighting. Car parking does impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. While the car park proposed will be landscaped the siting and size of the area is considered to be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt in this area.

46. There is considerable concern about the floodlights, which it has been confirmed are to be demountable. The issue of lighting levels needs to be more carefully considered, as insufficient consideration has been given to visual harm to the Green Belt when illuminated. This is a relatively open landscape in which lighting will have a significant visual impact.
47. Consequently I do not consider that the proposal does preserve the openness of the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to demonstrate why inappropriate development should be allowed in the Green Belt. Although Fulbourn is surrounded by the Green Belt and therefore alternative locations outside the Green Belt are limited, I do not consider that very special circumstances have so far been demonstrated, particularly in regard to sharing existing facilities on the Recreation Ground, to enable me to support the application as a Departure from the Development Plan.

### ***Conservation***

48. There are a number of Listed Buildings in proximity to the site, including properties on Stonebridge Lane, which directly abut the site. There clearly is a negative impact upon the setting of these properties, particularly due to the fencing and floodlights when in use. The comments of the Conservation Manager are awaited and this issue will be discussed with members at the meeting.

### ***Wildlife***

49. Insufficient regard has been paid to the neighbouring wildlife sites and the loss of habitat resulting from these proposals. Additional information is required to ensure that harm to the nature conservation sites and local biodiversity is minimised and appropriately mitigated.

### ***Residential amenities***

50. The site is in close proximity to a significant number of residential properties and properties on Stonebridge Lane will directly adjoin the site. The club already plays its games from the neighbouring recreation ground and as such the level of activity generally in the area may not increase significantly. I am however very concerned about the impact upon the properties which directly adjoin the site as these will suffer considerable disturbance due to the noise of games, vehicle movements, and light from the floodlights. Several properties will also suffer a loss of privacy. In particular, properties at Stonebridge Lane, three of which are sited a few metres away from the site boundary and do not have boundary treatments.

### ***Highways***

51. The access arrangements as proposed are not entirely adequate, as noted in the comments of the Local Highways Authority. The access is not sufficient to accommodate coaches, which are expected to bring teams and supporters to the site. The Local Highways Authority is not clear as to whether access for coaches could be achieved at this location and clarification will be sought prior to the meeting. The introduction of a footway to the Balsham Road layby will have a significant visual impact on this semi-rural location and is likely to result in loss of hedge in this location, further increasing the visual intrusion of the development. If such provision were to be included I would wish to be assured that this hedge would be protected and retained.

52. Car parking has been addressed above in considering the impact upon the Green Belt. The proposals include 83 car parking spaces, six of which are for disabled users. Given the capacity of the stadium to hold 235 spectators and the likely numbers of officials, players etc. this level of car parking provision will not be adequate. 235 spectators requires one space per four seats, resulting in a parking requirement of 59 spaces. In addition, I consider it appropriate for additional provision of spaces in relation to the club house to be required, which at a standard of 1 space per 8m<sup>2</sup> results in a need for 32 additional spaces, totalling 91 spaces. Therefore the level of parking proposed is not adequate for the development and potentially could result in increased on-street parking. I am not entirely convinced however, that it is necessary for the development to include its own parking, as this is not referred to in the requirements of the Ridgeons League supplied with the application. Given the relationship with the recreation ground scope to utilise existing parking should be explored first.
53. There has been no provision for cycle parking within the scheme.

#### ***Need***

54. While this is a 'commercial' enterprise the proposals will clearly provide a much needed sporting facility not only for Fulbourn village but for the wider area. It is clear from comments received that this facility is needed. I remain concerned however that while seemingly an ideal location, being close to existing facilities, insufficient regard has been paid to the harm that will result to neighbouring residential properties and the surrounding area. The applicants have identified four other sites that have been considered. While all of these are in the Green Belt they do not have the same issues regarding neighbouring amenity or potential harm to important site of wildlife interest. These alternative options should be reconsidered. Sharing existing facilities within the Cambridge Area is an alternative option but is one which would remove a valued local service from the Village.

#### ***Future development of the site***

55. While generally not a material consideration in determining this particular application, it is worth noting that the applicants have been offered a twenty-five year lease of the land. Future use of the land for other forms of development would have to be considered on their planning merits. The loss of a sporting facility however would be resisted under current policies. As the site is in the Green Belt and outside of the village framework, commercial development would be inappropriate and residential development would have to be on an 'exception' basis i.e. 100% affordable housing to meet local housing need. In my opinion at this time, an exception site in this location would not be appropriate, as it is not well related to the built area and would damage the character of the village and the rural landscape.

#### **Recommendation**

56. In light of the above comments and having balanced the various issues that arise from the proposals the recommendation is one of **REFUSAL** on the following grounds:
1. The proposed football ground, associated car parking and access are within the Cambridge Green Belt. While National Policies, Structure Plan Policy P9/2a and Policy GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan do allow essential facilities for outdoor sports it is required that these preserve the openness of the Green Belt. This development, as a result of the proposed

car parking, floodlights and three metre high fencing will be visually harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and as such is 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt contrary to policies GB2 and GB5 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004 and P9/2a of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003.

2. The proposed football ground will, as a result of the proposed car parking, floodlights and boundary enclosures, create a visually intrusive feature into the landscape and surrounding area and, is not appropriately screened to minimise the visual intrusion. The development will result in significant harm to neighbouring residential amenities due to noise disturbance from cars and during games, and visual intrusion from the floodlights. In addition the relationship with residential properties on Stonebridge Lane is such that loss of privacy will result. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies RT1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2003 and P4/1 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003 which limit such development where they fail to protect the local environment, landscape or residential amenity.
3. The application fails to consider the impact upon identified wildlife sites including the Fulbourn Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Nature Reserve. The proposals are therefore insufficiently detailed and fail to safeguard these important sites as required by policies RT1 and EN9 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004 and P1/2 and P7/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003 which seek to protect biodiversity and wildlife from unmitigated harm.
4. The proposed access arrangement fails to meet the needs of pedestrians and will not be suitable for access by coaches. In addition, inadequate provision for car parking and no provision has been made for cycle parking within the development. The access therefore, fails to provide an appropriate means of access to the public highway and will compromise highway safety, particularly for pedestrians, contrary to Policies TP1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2003 and P8/1 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning file Ref. S/0636/06/F

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