

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

6th December 2006

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Head of Planning Services

S/1742/06/F - GIRTON

Floodlighting at Howe Close Sports Field, Whitehouse Lane, Off Huntingdon Road

Recommendation: Approval

Date for Determination: 31st October 2006

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The sports field site is situated to the end of Whitehouse Lane and forms part of the Anglia Ruskin University. The site is approximately 0.5ha and consists of a small sports pavilion and car park, positioned to the south of the site; the remainder of the site is playing fields. This is a Green Belt site. The Hotel Felix is set to the south west of the site, and the residential properties of Thornton Close back on to the northwest boundary. The National Institute of Agricultural Botany is to the southeast.
2. The application, submitted on 5th September 2006, proposes to install 5 no. separate lights mounted 2m high from the flat roof of the pavilion, to floodlight a 24m sweep of land on the northeast and northwest sides of the pavilion. This is to allow for training during the hours of 4pm till 9pm four nights per week, during the months of November, December and February only.
3. The University estimates that 300 – 350 students and staff would benefit from the use of the facility in an average week and the provision of lighting would help support a key objective to increase participation in sport. To date the sports clubs have found it extremely difficult to find suitable floodlit training areas locally. Due to educational reasons it is rarely practical for training sessions to be held in the daylight hours and the floodlights would therefore provide the clubs with greater flexibility for training and increased participation leading to improved performance at local, regional and national levels.

Planning History

4. **S/0182/87/F** In 1987 an application for a college of further education was submitted and withdrawn prior to being determined.

Planning Policy

5. **Policy P9/2a 'Green Belt'** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003, states that a Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge, which will define the extent of urban growth. The purposes of this Green Belt are to preserve the unique character of Cambridge; maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; prevent communities within the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the City. Within the Green Belt, new development will be limited to that required for.... outdoor sport...

6. **Policy GB2 ‘General Principles’** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Development is defined as inappropriate unless it comprises, amongst other things, buildings providing essential facilities for outdoor sports and recreation. Any development considered appropriate under the criteria of GB2 must be located and designed so that it does not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
7. **Policy GB5 ‘Recreational Role of the Green Belt’** of the Local Plan states that the District Council will not support proposals for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation in the Green Belt, which requires, amongst other things, floodlights.
8. **Policy ES3 ‘Commercial and Recreational Lighting Facilities’** of the Local Plan states that in considering proposals requiring external lighting facilities the District Council must be satisfied that; the lighting scheme is the minimum required for the task; there is no light spillage above the horizontal; appropriate measures are in place to ensure the lighting does not have an adverse effect upon neighbouring or nearby residential properties; in edge of village or countryside locations appropriate measures are taken to screen the lighting in order to reduce the impact on the surrounding countryside.

Consultation

9. **Girton Parish Council** recommends approval, but requests the lighting is limited to term time only – November, December and February, for the hours 4 – 9pm for a maximum of 4 evenings per week.
10. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** recommends various conditions be attached to any approval limiting the use of the lighting, requiring the lighting to be controlled automatically and restricting the beam of the main lights.

Representations

11. The application has been advertised as a departure from the Development Plan.
12. A letter has been received from residents of 28 Thornton Close, Girton, objecting to the lighting due to the impact on local residents, a drastic change to the rural and green belt setting, noise and disturbance from the use of the facilities late into the evening and potential light pollution.
13. Residents of 26 Thornton Close, Girton object to the use of portable lighting used on the sports field, which is inappropriately angled creating a nuisance and hazard by shining directly into the rear of the property. They object to permanent lighting, concerned about urban light pollution and the nuisance to residential properties.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

Impact on the Green Belt

14. While the site is Green Belt land and the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development, the proposed lighting is to be positioned towards the built up end of the site and not out in the middle of the countryside. In this respect the lighting is better related to its surroundings and less intrusive to the open countryside. The proposed

lighting is to enable the training facilities to be used during the winter months. Training grids are to be marked out and the lighting, positioned on the corners of the sports pavilion will cover a distance of circa 25m to the front and side of the building. The facility would otherwise be unused during the dark winter months. The use of the lighting facilities will be limited to University term times only, for the months of November, December and February and is to be restricted to 4 evenings a week only. Therefore, I consider that the impact on the Green Belt is minimal and its openness will be preserved since no additional structures are proposed.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

15. While the objections of residents are noted, the actual impact on the properties of Thornton Close is considered to be minimal. The gardens of Thornton Close are over 50m away from the proposed lighting spill and as such it is unlikely that the lighting will cause any significant disturbance. Notwithstanding this, it will be conditioned that the lights be switched off automatically at 21:00hrs. Furthermore, the likely noise and disturbance to residents from the use of the site will be no greater than currently experienced during the lighter evenings.
16. I do not consider that the application needs to be referred to the Secretary of State as a Departure or under the Green Belt Direction 2005 on the grounds that its scale, nature and location would not have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Recommendation

17. Approval with conditions:
 1. SCA – RCA;
 2. The lighting hereby approved shall be turned off no later than 21:00 hours and shall not be turned back on until after 07:30 hrs the following day.
(Reason - To protect the amenities of adjoining residents and surrounding area);
 3. Notwithstanding the information submitted with the application, no development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of an automatic time control switch to be installed to demonstrate that the period of operation of the floodlights will be restricted to the hours detailed above in Condition 2, and the approved measures shall be implemented prior to first use of the floodlights and permanently retained thereafter.
(Reason – To protect the amenities of adjoining residents and surrounding area);
 4. The lights hereby permitted shall not be used for more than 4 evenings per week, and only in the months of November, December and February.
(Reason – To protect the amenities of adjoining residents and surrounding area);
 5. The floodlights, hereby permitted, shall not be installed other than in accordance with the recommendations of the Institute of Lighting Engineers “Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light Pollution” and the provision of BS 5489 Part 9.
(Reason – To protect the amenities of adjoining residents and surrounding area);

6. Within one month of the installation of the lights, they shall be inspected by a qualified lighting engineer in liaison with the Local Planning Authority and any defects identified shall be rectified within one month of the inspection.
(Reason - To protect the amenities of adjoining residents).

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it is considered that the limited scale of the proposal, the siting of the floodlights upon an existing building, the protection of the openness of the Green Belt by reason of the absence of additional structures and the limited use of the floodlights, which are to be controlled by condition, all contribute to very special circumstances being demonstrated in accordance with Policies P9/2a of the County Structure Plan 2003 and GB2 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004.
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Neighbouring Amenities

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridge and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003
- Planning Application File S/1742/06/F

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