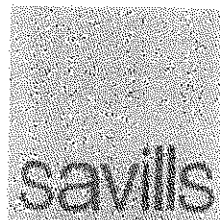


S/1372/13/FL - GURTON - APPENDIX 2

17 September 2014
CAPL/307190/A3/CF/CC



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Dear Paul,

RE: PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING PAVILION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SPORTS PAVILION, TWO FENCED AND FLOOD LIT ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCHES, CAR, COACH AND CYCLE PARKING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS AT HOWES CLOSE SPORTS GROUND, WHITEHOUSE LANE, CAMBRIDGE (S/1372/14/FL)

On behalf of the applicant, Anglia Ruskin University Higher Education Corporation, we set out below further explanation of very special circumstances that exist in relation to the proposed development in the Green Belt. Whilst we retain the opinion that the scheme should be considered appropriate development, very special circumstances are set out should the Council reach a different conclusion.

A recent appeal decision is enclosed with this letter (appeal reference 2214615). The decision related to the erection of 6x 11m floodlights at a primary school in the Green Belt. In this case the Inspector confirmed that the proposed lighting columns were *'directly related to the use of the all weather pitch'* and so the Inspector concluded that they *'would satisfy the exception criteria and would not amount to inappropriate development'* (para.6). In addition to this, the Inspector identified *'the benefits that it would bring to the social and well being of the pupils in terms of providing greater use of existing sports facilities over a longer period during winter months'* (para.11).

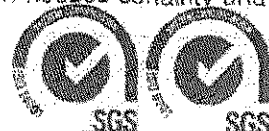
Whilst we consider that the proposals (including proposed floodlighting) are appropriate development in the Green Belt, in line with the conclusions of the abovementioned appeal decision, very special circumstances are set out within Section 6 of the Planning Statement submitted as part of the application. This letter provides a further reiteration of points raised, though focused on the needs of the University itself.

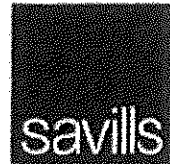
The Planning Statement clarifies the significant shortfall of sports pitches within the Cambridge sub-region, most notably all weather pitches with associated floodlighting. This results in considerable competition from various clubs and teams to access existing facilities, with many young people not having the opportunity to use those surfaces best suited to the sport in question. This situation has an adverse effect on health and wellbeing, as noted within the Planning Statement.

The University has limited direct access to sports facilities, with much reliance being placed on hiring facilities from other clubs or organisations. This exacerbates the competition for access to facilities and restricts the ability for students to use the facilities as and when they require. Given the fixed schedules required for academic terms and matches, this poses significant difficulties for the University. The University currently has 3 men's football teams, a women's football team, two men's rugby teams, a women's rugby team, a men's hockey team, a women's hockey team, an American football team and a staff football team that all require access to facilities comparable to those proposed. In addition to this, other student sports teams and activities require similar surfaces for training. The Howes Close Sports Ground is within the ownership of the University and developing enhanced and all weather sports pitches at the site will provide much needed certainty and

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assurances that students will be able to access high quality all weather pitches throughout the academic year. The proposed floodlighting is crucial for this to occur to enable teams to train in winter months and for sport to be played in evenings. Such access better reflects the expectations that students hold for a University of this scale and with a reputation for sports education, which the University seek to retain and enhance. This is reflected by the University's implementation of a sports, recreation and activity strategy 2012-2017, known as 'Active Anglia'. This sets out four strategic themes as follows:

- To develop and maintain a comprehensive infrastructure for sport, recreation and activity through developing its management, staff, marketing, facilities and systems.
- To encourage healthy lifestyles and increase levels of participation through developing a wide range of inclusive opportunities for physical activity and recreation.
- To improve sports performance and sporting excellence through the utilisation of sports science expertise, target/focus sports and supporting sports clubs through coaching and development.
- To develop and maximise partnerships, working across the community creating opportunities through county and regional bodies, raising our profile and developing partnership programmes and projects through sport, education, leadership, volunteering and coaching.

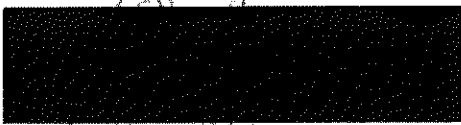
The proposed development is an important factor in addressing and achieving these themes, whilst also providing an essential resource for a number of degrees that the University provide including Sports Coaching and Physical Education BSc and Sports Science BSc. The University also intend to expand courses on offer with an intended MSc in Sports Science from September 2015. This indicates the role that the proposal plays in the University being able to provide high quality educational facilities and to be able to compete with other comparable educational establishments where facilities of this calibre are expected.

The University's main site on East Road and other subsidiary sites across Cambridge do not benefit from existing space for outdoor sports facilities. The East Road site does contain one tennis court but given the ongoing pressures for redevelopment for academic space, opportunities for sports facilities to expand on any existing University sites within Cambridge are not feasible. The existing tennis court on the East Road site also fails to provide the facilities necessary for a range of sports as required by the University's students. The Howes Close Sports Ground is therefore a vital opportunity to enhance the much needed sports facilities for the students, whilst also providing the additional benefit of access for the community. This extends the health and social benefits of the proposals beyond the student community to residents and better integrates the University within the local community. This includes opportunities for students to become involved in coaching or assisting in local youth clubs and other similar activities.

It is also reiterated that Cambridge is extremely pressured in terms of space available to accommodate the demand for sports facilities. This has been acknowledged by Sport England. Cambridge City Council's Open Spaces and Recreation Strategy 2011 also recognises that due to the existing built-up nature of the City, there are limited opportunities for creating new spaces and that there are opportunities within the Green Belt for provision. Further details on this shortage of space are provided within the Planning Statement.

In light of the above points and further details provided within the Planning Statement, the benefits associated with the proposed development substantially outweigh any limited harm that may be associated with the proposals in this instance.

Yours sincerely



Olaire Frost
Planner

site itself, built form is kept to the minimum required and the proposed pavilion is located close to the existing access and Whitehouse Lane, minimising the building's prominence on site. Floodlighting has been designed to ensure that light is tightly controlled and is focussed on the pitch area whilst the height of the columns ensures they are not visible in wider views from beyond the site as they sit below the height of trees along the northern boundary.

6.15 The pavilion has been designed to have a low profile so as to minimise impact from residential properties in Girton and to ensure it is not visible in views from beyond the site. As shown in the Visual Assessment, the building is not visible from the surrounding viewpoints within the Green Belt.

6.16 In addition to the above, the proposed number of pitches on site remain as existing, albeit two associated with additional structures. The proposed artificial pitches, lighting and fenced areas are considered essential elements to support a beneficial use of Green Belt for sport and to maximise the use of the facilities, in line with policy GB/5 of the Development Control Policies DPD and the NPPF which seeks to encourage the use of Green Belt for recreational and outdoor sports activities. There is a current lack of all weather facilities within the sub-region for both hockey and football. This particularly restricts the opportunities for young people to engage in sport during the winter months when grass pitches are in poor condition and not available for use after school owing to dark nights. Floodlit artificial surfaces provide the opportunity for young people to take part in activity after school, when dark, but also provide a high quality surface which improves technique and does not result in cancellations when grass pitches become waterlogged and muddy.

6.17 It is therefore considered that such facilities are appropriate within the Green Belt and will not adversely affect either the openness of the Green Belt nor the purposes of including land within it.

6.18 Should South Cambridgeshire District Council not agree with the above conclusions and consider that the development is "inappropriate", it is considered that the very special circumstances would include the following:

- There is a significant shortfall of sports pitches within the Cambridge sub-region, particularly all weather pitches with associated floodlighting as evidenced by local studies. Correspondence has been obtained from various sports clubs and bodies re-affirming this point (included within the Statement of Community Involvement). It should also be noted that Sport England has previously acknowledged the inability to accommodate replacement playing fields elsewhere in the City (see Committee Report for C/07/0003/OUT relating to phase 1 of the Darwin Green development at Appendix 1).

This restriction of space, in addition to the residential growth and demand for Cambridge and the wider sub-region, further strengthen the importance of enhancing existing facilities.

- As noted above, the size of the pavilion and pitches reflect standards set by Sport England and as such indicates the need for the proposed pavilion facilities in order to serve the number of pitches already located on site, albeit two of which will become artificial pitches as a result of the proposals.
- There is a lack of all weather facilities within the sub-region for both hockey and football, which particularly restricts the opportunities for young people to engage in sport during the winter months when grass pitches are in poor condition and often not available for use after school owing to dark nights and waterlogged/muddy conditions. Flood lit artificial surfaces provide the opportunity for people to take part in activity after school, provide a high quality surface which improves technique and does not result in cancellations when grass pitches become waterlogged and muddy. The proposed development will enable community access and deliver associated health benefits, as supported through the NPPF and the development plan. Obesity is an established national concern with the prevalence of obesity among adults increasing sharply during the 1990s and early 2000s. Regular physical exercise can reduce the risk of obesity as well as other chronic conditions including coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, mental health problems and musculoskeletal conditions. The Department of Health recommend in their physical activity guidelines (2011) that adults undertake at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity aerobic activity every week and children over five should engage in at least 1 hour of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day. It is therefore considered that facilities to encourage and facilitate such exercise should be supported, especially when taken in the context of a shortage of facilities as noted above. Whilst the Public Health profiles for South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge (2013) suggest that estimated levels of adult healthy eating, physical activity and obesity are better than the England average, there remain opportunities for improvement with some notable differences between the two authorities and the best authorities in England (see Appendix 2 for the authority summaries). Government figures² estimate that problems associated with being overweight or obese cost the NHS more than £5 billion every year, with those cost expected to rise to £9.7 billion by 2050 and with the wider costs to society expected to reach £49.9 billion per year³. Increasing opportunities for sport will deliver significant health benefits and help to reduce the strain on local health services and reduce costs to taxpayers of tackling issues such as obesity.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reducing-obesity-and-improving-diet>

³ http://www.noo.org.uk/NOO_about_obesity

- Sport plays a significant role in modern society, not only in terms of health and exercise, but in terms of social cohesion and community well-being. Sport England's *Creating safer communities* sets out that sport plays a significant role in local communities, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and increasing educational attainment in young people. The facilities will provide new opportunities for sport for staff and students of the University and local communities, enabling increased social interaction and enhanced community well-being.

6.19 In order for the very special circumstances to exist, the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm must be clearly outweighed by other considerations.

6.20 As set out at paragraphs 6.9 to 6.13 of this Statement, the proposals do not adversely impact on Cambridge as a compact city, the need to maintain or enhance the quality of its setting or the need to prevent communities from merging into one another and the city and there is consequently very limited harm arising to the Green Belt purposes. Indeed, the proposals support the notion of Cambridge as a compact city and are in accordance with the character of this part of the Green Belt, as set out in the Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment. There are significant benefits in terms of delivering enhanced sports facilities for the University and local community, which if sports needs are to be met at Cambridge, will inevitably need to be within the Green Belt. The benefits of the development clearly outweigh any potential harm in this instance.

Design

6.21 The design of the proposal has been an integral part of the pre-application process with the design of the scheme not only relating to the appearance of the proposed pavilion but also the wider site layout, including pitch positioning and other such points to ensure an effective, practical development results. The proposed flood lit pitches have been positioned in a location to ensure no significant adverse impact on adjacent properties in terms of light spillage or evening noise and the pavilion has been re-positioned to facilitate access to the pitch for both users and for pitch management, with equipment stored within the pavilion. The repositioning of the pavilion also provides greater separation from the Hotel Felix, with the low profile of the pavilion minimising the prominence of the building within the proximate landscape. More specific details and design justification are set out within the Design and Access Statement that accompanies this planning application.

