

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

5 November 2014

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number: S/1372/14/FL

Parish: Girton

Proposal: Demolition of existing pavilion and development of a new sports pavilion, two fenced and floodlit artificial turf pitches, car, coach and cycle parking and associated landscaping and access improvements

Site address: Howes Close Sports Ground, Huntingdon Road

Applicant: Anglia Ruskin University Higher Education Corporation

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Key material considerations: Principle (including Green Belt), design, impact on character of the area, residential amenity, highway safety, drainage and other matters.

Committee Site Visit: Yes

Departure Application: Yes

Presenting Officer: Paul Sexton

Application brought to Committee because: The officer recommendation of delegated approval is contrary to the recommendation of refusal from Girton Parish Council

Date by which decision due: 18 September 2014

Update to Report

Consultations - Paragraph 36

1. **Environmental Health Officer** – generally accepts the clarifications put forward in the agent's letter. However, the assumption with regard to the flood lighting and luminaire intensity that refers to the 'urban context of the locality', and that the lighting

levels will be 'deemed in character' is questioned. The area is currently very dark and light being introduced at a level in character with an urban area will be noticeable.

2. The statement that lux levels will be much less once the luminaires have burnt in is accepted, and would agree a condition that the lux levels on the football pitch be maintained at 200 lux +/- 10% as suggested.
3. He does not agree that the time limit should be extended to 22.00 hours as 21.00 hours is appropriate given the location. Low level localised lighting can be used in the vicinity of the changing rooms so that people using the facilities can get changed and leave without the main floodlights being left on.
4. The agent's comments on intensification of use are generally accepted, but it is maintained that an intensification will none-the-less occur compared to the current use of the site.

Consultations - Paragraph 61

5. **Drainage Manager** – has no objection to the proposals, as the proposed design for drainage will benefit the area. A detailed surface water drainage scheme should be required by condition.

Representations – Paragraph 64

6. In response to the additional information submitted by the applicant's agent further letters have been received from the occupiers of 14, 28, 34, 36, and 62 Thornton Close, which rehearse objections summarised in the main report, but which add further comments as summarised below. The submission from the occupiers of 36 Thornton Close includes an independent noise report, which has also been circulated to Members.
 - a. Increase in size of floodlit pitches can only increase burden. Lighting should be at lowest possible level. Although applicants recognised lighting levels on the football pitch could be lowered, the application has not been changed.
 - b. The noisy activities should be moved closer to the busy A14.
 - c. No proposed decrease in the number of hours. Floodlighting restricted to 22.00 hours and the use of the pavilion restricted to 23.00 hours (which can easily spill over) is not satisfactory.
 - d. Restriction of use suggested by officers will not reduce exposure to noise to an acceptable level. Noise break out from pavilion will not be able to be controlled.
 - e. Concerns about noise have not been given sufficient weight. Intensification of use, and therefore the level of disturbance, has been underestimated. Estimated that the applicant used the grass pitches for about 30 weeks last year. At 6 hours a week (capacity suggested by the FA), this would be a total of 180 hours for the year. With holiday periods the grass pitches would have a maximum capacity of 312 hours a year. The synthetic surfaces and floodlighting allow for an increase of 11 and 14 times respectively.
 - f. Reference is made to a Council's duty when providing a play area or football kick-about pitch, and that it would be deemed to be acting unreasonably if

either of these were placed close to houses or garden boundaries due to the nuisance from noise and damage to footballs. Examples are referred to where planning permission has been refused, or existing facilities have been forced to close, following objections from residents through excessive noise and light pollution. One example is quoted where a planning condition restricts community use of sports pitches to prevent noise and floodlight nuisance to neighbours. These arguments support objections to the Howes Close proposal.

- g. The report submitted by the occupiers of 36 Thornton Close states that the noise report submitted with the application concludes that noise levels generated by sources associated with the proposed development are expected to be acceptable, taking into account the proposed acoustic design measures. Such measures are not clearly specified and in particular there are no measures to attenuate noise from sporting activities. 'Sports noise' is regarded as an established and acceptable feature of the area. This conclusion is considered unjustified and has not been proven.

The report makes no assessment of noise from existing sports facilities at the site and has based the impact on noise of a single male shouting at a distance of 1 metre. No account was taken of the considerable increase in noise exposure due to the proposed increase in hours of use, particularly during evenings.

The noise levels calculated at the worst case residents gardens appeared to be inaccurate, these were corrected to give levels of 57-63dB(A), depending on whether the properties had a solid boundary fence. This was considerably above the quoted 41dB(A), and was also above the guideline level of 55dB(A) used in the assessment.

The noise survey did not assess the more sensitive late evening period from 8 to 10pm, and the use of BS8233 criteria is not considered as the impulsive nature of the noise sources cannot be considered as anonymous.

An alternative method of assessment has shown that noise levels from the proposed football and hockey games would be likely to exceed the criteria of BS4142, and thus give rise to justifiable complaints from residents of Thornton Close.

- h. Spectator numbers are unrealistic, and will be much higher.
- i. Sport England's support is conditional on a Community Use Agreement and yet the applicant's letter states that its demand must take priority. It does not appear possible to balance Sport England's requirements, those of the University, and respect for local resident's right to a reasonable level of residential amenity. Officers are not giving this latter requirement adequate weight.
- j. Pavilion building will have major impact on openness of the Green Belt and is excessively large. There are no exceptional circumstances for approval. A single storey building would preserve openness much better.
- k. Higher traffic levels onto Huntingdon Road will be dangerous.

Planning Considerations –Paragraphs 89-97

7. The additional representations relating to noise and floodlighting have been referred to the Environmental Health Officer for further assessment, and officers will provide a further update at the meeting.

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