

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

11 January 2017

AUTHOR/S: Head of Development Management

Application Number:	S/2084/16/FL
Parish(es):	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(s):	Anglia Ruskin University (ARU)
Recommendation:	Delegated approval, subject to consideration by the Security of State
Key material considerations:	Principle (including Green Belt), design, impact on character of the area, residential amenity (lighting and noise), highway safety, drainage and other matters
Committee Site Visit:	06 December 2016
Departure Application:	Yes
Presenting Officer:	Rebecca Ward, Senior Planning Officer
Application brought to Committee because:	The officer recommendation of approval is contrary to the recommendation of refusal from Girton Parish Council
Date by which decision due:	13 January 2017 (extension of time requested)

Executive Summary

1. As indicated in the previous application for the site, officers are of the view that 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.
2. The applicant has submitted a Statement of Community Involvement and Management Plan with this revised application. 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, and that these will include residents of both this District and Cambridge City.
3. The enhanced facilities at Howes Close will be consistent with the Councils' Planning Pitch Strategy which was endorsed by members in June 2016 and now provides an

evidence base for the emerging Local Plan to ensure there is provision for recreational facilities between the authorities.

4. Members recommended refusal of the previous application due to noise and lighting concerns. The applicant has sought to mitigate the impact through a number of different measures, including reduced operation hours of pitches, lighting and the pavilion. A Management Plan has also been submitted to ensure future users adhere to a code of conduct and the reduced community use will enable for more effective management of clubs that use the facility. It is the view of officers that sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate there would not be a significant adverse impact on residential amenity.
5. Officers are of the view that the issues in this case are finely balanced. As a matter of fact the proposed development would have an impact on the openness of this part of the Cambridge Green Belt, however Policy GB/5 and the NPPF support the appropriate provision of facilities for sport in the Green Belt, and it is the benefit of the provision of these, and the enhanced facilities for ARU, which continues to form the main basis of the applicant's 'very special circumstances' case. A sequential test has also been submitted in the revised application to demonstrate that there are no suitable alternatives to the application site.
6. Officers are of the view that the applicant has demonstrated, very special circumstances and that the public benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt in this instance. As such, officers recommend approval of the application.

Planning History

7. C/0486/67/0 – Use of land as playing fields

C/0873/71/D – Erection of pavilion with changing accommodation - Approved

S/1742/06/F - Floodlighting – Approved

S/1215/07/F - Variation of Condition 4 of Planning Permission S/1742/06/F to allow for floodlights to be used for period July to September – Approved

S/1409/10 – Installation of a 1.8m wire fence and steel gates - Approved

S/1372/14/FL - 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 - Planning Committee made the decision to refuse the application in November 2014 on the grounds that the scheme was inappropriate development in the Green Belt that the 'noise and lighting' impact would be harmful to residential amenity. There were no 'very special circumstances' to overcome this harm.

07/0003/OUT (Darwin Green - City Council) - Mixed use development comprising up to 1593 dwellings, primary school, community facilities, retail units (use classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5) and associated infrastructure including vehicular, pedestrian and cycleway accesses, open space and drainage works - Approved December 2016

15/1670/REM (Darwin Green - City Council) - Reserved matters for 114 residential units and local centre including library, community rooms, health center and retail units pursuant to outline consent 07/0003/OUT - Approved March 2016

PRE/0040/16 - Pre-application advice sought for a re-submission.

Members were also provided with a technical briefing from the applicant prior to the meeting on 7 December 2016.

National Guidance

8. National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Development Plan Policies

9. The extent to which any of the following policies are out of date and the weight to be attached to them is addressed later in the report.

South Cambridgeshire Core Strategy DPD, 2007

ST/1 Green Belt

South Cambridgeshire LDF Development Control Policies DPD, 2007:

ST/1 Green Belt
DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development
DP/3 Development Criteria
DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments
DP/7 Development Framework
GB/1 Development in the Green Belt
GB/2 Mitigating the Impact of Development in the Green Belt
GB/5 Recreation in the Green Belt
NE/1 Renewable Energy
NE/3 Renewable Energy Technology in New Developments
NE/6 Biodiversity
NE/11 Flood Risk
NE/12 Water Conservation
NE/14 Lighting Proposals
NE/15 Noise Pollution
CH/2 Archaeological Sites
TR/1 Planning for More Sustainable Travel
TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards

10. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):**

Open Space in New Developments SPD - Adopted January 2009
Trees & Development Sites SPD - Adopted January 2009
Landscape in New Developments SPD - Adopted March 2010
Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009
District Design Guide SPD - Adopted March 2010
Health Impact Assessment SPD— Adopted March 2011

11. **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission - March 2014**

S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
S/4 Cambridge Green Belt
CC/3 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Developments
CC/4 Sustainable Design and Construction
CC/8 Sustainable Drainage Systems

CC/9 Managing Flood Risk
HQ/1 Design Principles
NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
NH/4 Biodiversity
NH/8 Mitigating the Impact of Development in and adjoining the Green Belt
NH/10 Recreation in the Green Belt
SC/10 Lighting Proposals
SC/11 Noise Pollution
TI/3 Parking Provision

Consultation

12. **Girton Parish Council** - The Parish Council had received a presentation about the proposed application from Anglia Ruskin University at the July 2016 meeting, which had suggested that widespread consultation with residents had been undertaken and many of the problems with the previous 2014 application had been overcome.

The last application had been rejected because reasons for building in the greenbelt had not been substantiated, and there is nothing in the current documentation submitted to substantiate why building should be permitted in the greenbelt.

The current application has tried to address issues of light and noise pollution highlighted in the 2014 application. The application was rejected with one vote in favour and one abstention. The Council request that the application be considered by the SCDC Planning Committee.

Additional comments : The Parish Council rejected the application on the following planning grounds, the previous grounds for rejection still withstanding:

1. Special circumstances are required to merit building on the greenbelt, which have not been met by this application. The 2014 application was rejected on these grounds and there are no mitigating facts in the amended application. The National Planning Policy Framework means that greenbelt must be protected from encroachment by urban areas ie Cambridge city.
2. Noise pollution. There is no written evidence to suggest that the proposed acoustic fence would be effective.
3. Light pollution. There would be significant glare.
4. The provision of cultural facilities would not meet local needs ie those of Girton residents.
5. The proposed Pavilion is very large for the site and too close to existing residential areas.
6. As the proposed site is close to residential gardens in Thornton Close, stray balls could be a

The Parish Council has received residents' objections, also forwarded to SCDC Planning Department. The disruption to residents' lives would not be minimal. The Parish Council requests that this application be considered by the SCDC Planning Committee.

13. **Cambridge City Council Planning Policy** - I write to support the proposed

developments by Anglia Ruskin University of their land at Howe's Place off Huntingdon Road. Although just outside the City Council boundary by only a few metres this site is seen as a key facility on the City fringes that will benefit students, local sports clubs and residents of both Local Authorities.

I also write to confirm that Cambridge City Council has conditionally allotted funds for an award of up to £250,000 from the City Council's Section 106 Developer contributions for outdoor sport from the nearby Trinity College playing fields development, towards the proposed development of facilities, especially towards the new pavilion and community club use for the artificial pitches.

Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have recently completed and formally adopted a joint Playing Pitch Strategy for both local authorities, looking at key usage of outdoor sports areas, which includes a strategic analysis of Football, Hockey, Rugby, Cricket and artificial pitch provision within the two authorities. This Strategy has also been developed alongside and has the approval of the National Governing Bodies for the four key sports.

The proposed works at Howe's Place have been identified as a key strategic need to support outdoor Sport (especially Football and Hockey) by both Local Authorities and forms part of the City's and South Cambridgeshire's action plans to develop, promote and secure outdoor sports facilities.

Anglia Ruskin's proposed development at Howe's Place for both Hockey and Football artificial pitches are clearly identified as a strategic location and have a strategic need for outdoor sport provision to both Local Authorities to meet current and future growth in the County and have been embedded and formally adopted within both Authorities combined Playing Pitch Strategy to 2032.

14. **Cambridgeshire County Council Growth Team** – No objections to the application

15. **District Council Environmental Health Officer (EHO)** - I wish to confirm that I have received a copy of the above application and have considered the implications of the proposal and amendments. I conclude local residents would be unlikely to suffer any statutory nuisance as a result of this proposal in its current form and therefore we do not wish to raise any objection to this development in principle.

I am happy that the issues raised previously by my colleagues have been fully addressed, regarding the use of the pavilion, the grounds, position of the acoustic fencing and the lighting arrangements. In particular the change from a semi public facility available for hire, with a integral bar, to a pure sports venue only available to groups that would or could be fully controlled by the sports grounds own management alters the situation entirely. Given the nature of both the structural and management revisions this proposal is effectively a new scheme when compared to the previous proposal for the site.

One area of note is the acoustic report by Adrian James Acoustics Ltd, dated 26th July 2016. This report was prepared against the background that there is no clear cut national guidance or methodology that is applicable to sports venues on the same basis that national standards have been set for industrial or transport infrastructure. Given this situation the environmental health department can only consider whether the methodology employed is reasonable given all the circumstances and would be likely to give a sensible defendable result. I think the report achieves these aims and because it tends towards the worst case scenario in any situation it will not prove to be overoptimistic if the Howes Sports Ground is permitted to develop as proposed.

The proposed development should not exceed the BS 8233:2014 criteria for external amenity in the gardens of the nearest residents, which is an essential requirement given our previous advice.

Regarding the siting of the acoustic fencing, the proposed location is the sensible option if the alternative would be to try and fence around individual pitches. That would not be either effective or viable given that the fences would need to be far enough back from the pitches to prevent them interfering with the game. In practice the primary reduction of nuisance and even casual disturbance for local residents has got to be achieved through the management of the site as a whole and of behaviour on the pitches.

Lighting of the pitches is another area where the current proposals represent a major improvement over the previous proposals in terms of technical quality. However by its nature flood lighting is usually highly visible from neighbouring properties, even if there is no nuisance. The time management of the pitches becomes the major factor in limiting its impact and in this case the proposed use of the site would appear to reduce the likely impact of the flood lighting to an absolute minimum.

Given the above it will probably be very clear that the full and proper management of this facility is the key to preventing this development causing unreasonable disturbance to local residents and therefore I would suggest something along the lines of the following condition be imposed if this application is approved.

Conditions:

The management and day to day running of the sports facility must remain fully in line with all the arrangements set out in Howes Close Sports Ground Management Plan dated 22nd July 2016 (ref 22.07.16) and any changes to either the document or the management arrangements may only take place with the written agreement of the Council's Planning Department.

Recommendations:

As discussed it would be good practice to obtain an acoustic map, of the new sports facility and its immediate surroundings, so that you can present the information in the acoustic report to the Committee more clearly.

16. **District Council Urban Design Officer and Design Enabling Panel (taken from previous application)** - agreed that this is a good building, appropriately sited and of a scale suitable for the location, reflecting a sound design approach, but with the potential to be further improved to be a high quality building.

Suggested improvements included materials detailing; revisions to the enclosure of external plant and refuse area; rationalisation of window/door head/toplight details through the ground floor to create a consistent approach to fenestration treatment; careful attention to any signage; appropriate detailing of rainwater pipes, minimising visual impact of solar thermal panels and the railings; and details of covered cycle parking to ensure it does not detract from the building.

It is suggested that many of these details can be secured by conditions.

17. **Natural England** – No objections raised
18. **District Council Landscape Design Officer** - In principle, I would have no objection

with a development upon this site. I agree with the applicant that there would be limited landscape and visual effects from the pavilion, fenced pitches and acoustic fencing. However, due to landscape visual concerns I would object to the 15m high flood lighting columns.

I also have the following minor design comments for the applicant to consider:

- Where practicable, applicant to consider sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) particularly within the Green Belt. Although the applicant has included some new areas of grasscrete there is an opportunity to include other sustainable surface treatments other than tarmac.
- Avoid the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials, street furniture, lighting and signage as part of traffic calming measures wherever appropriate.

19. **District Council Ecology Officer** - This site has now been the subject of ecological assessment overall several years commencing in 2013.

The original assessment did not identify any significant constraints other than the need for further bat survey work upon the structures to be removed. In September 2015 further bat survey work was undertaken to build upon those undertaken in 2013. The bat surveys recorded a low to moderate level of bat activity and did not record any bats emerging from the buildings. The report notes that the surveys were all focussed at the end of the bat activity period but do not consider it to represent a significant survey constraint due to acceptable temperatures still being maintained.

However, close inspection of the main building did reveal the occurrence of a fresh bat dropping believed to be from a brown long-eared bat. The building is thus considered to be a bat roost and a European Protected Species licence should be obtained prior to its demolition.

The following condition is requested:

Where an offence under Regulation 41 of the Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 is likely to occur in respect of this permission hereby granted, no works of site clearance, demolition or construction shall take place which are likely to impact upon any species of bat unless a license to affect such species has been granted in accordance with the aforementioned Regulations and a copy thereof has been submitted to the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that no unlawful action results as consequence of any site development.

Prior to any development, site clearance or demolition taking place a scheme of mitigation shall be presented to the local planning authority for its written approval.

The mitigation scheme shall include (but not be limited to):

- 1) Details of timing of all works likely to affect a bat roost
- 2) Measures to be used to reduce the potential for harm to roosting bats in the building during its demolition.
- 3) Details of information to be presented to on-site workers to make them aware of the legislation protecting bats.
- 4) Details of when a pre-works bat inspection will be undertaken.
- 5) Details of sensitive lighting measures.
- 6) Details of new roost measures to be provided for bats (especially brown long-eared bats)

The approved scheme shall be fully implemented.

Please use the standard condition for the protection of nesting birds during the bird breeding season.

20. **Cambridgeshire County Council Local Highway Authority (LHA)** - Following the submission of the Transport Assessment undertaken by PBA for the proposed development the Highway Authority have no objections to the proposed development.

Therefore as per the Highway Authority previous comments of 13th September 2016:

Please add a condition to any permission that the Planning Authority is minded to issue in regard to this proposal requiring that no demolition or construction works shall commence on site until a traffic management plan has been agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. The principle areas of concern that should be addressed are:

- i. Movements and control of muck away lorries (all loading and unloading should be undertaken off the adopted public highway)
- ii. Contractor parking, for both phases all such parking should be within the curtilage of the site and not on street.
- iii. Movements and control of all deliveries (all loading and unloading should be undertaken off the adopted public highway)
- iv. Control of dust, mud and debris, in relationship to the highway.

Reason: in the interests of highway safety

Please add a condition to any permission that the Planning Authority is proposal requiring that the proposed access be constructed so that its falls and levels are such that no private water from the site drains across or onto Whitehouse Lane.

Reason: for the safe and effective operation of the highway

21. **Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Team (Archaeology)** - The site has already been subject to an archaeological trial trench evaluation. Therefore, we have no objections or requirements for this development.

22. **Cambridgeshire County Council Flood & Water Team (LLFRA)** - We have reviewed the submitted documents and can confirm as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) we have no objection in principle to the proposed development.

The applicant has demonstrated that surface water can be dealt with on site by using permeable paving and permeable surfacing, restricting surface water discharge to Qbar 6.2l/s for all rainfall events up to and including a 1 in 100 (including an appropriate allowance for climate change).

The LLFA is supportive of the use of permeable paving as in addition to controlling the rate of surface water leaving the site it also provides water quality treatment.

We recommend the following condition(s) are imposed requiring the following details :

- Detailed surface water drainage scheme
- Long term maintenance arrangements

23. **Environment Agency** – No objections in principle to the proposed development, however, recommendations and conditions are recommend to cover the following :

- consultation with the lead local flood and water authority
- surface water
- foul water
- pollution control
- contamination
- conservation

24. **Drainage Officer –** No comments

25. **Anglian Water (AW) –** No objections raised

26. **Contaminated Land Officer -** There are no immediately evident environmental constraints that would attract a contaminated land condition, however the development is a proposed sports area and vulnerable receptors should be taken into account. I recommend the following informative be attached to the consent:

If during the development contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority for, a remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Please return a copy of the decision notice regarding this application, quoting the Department's reference, when it has been determined.

27. **Sports England -** Sport England raises **no objection** to this application which is considered to meet exception E5 of our adopted Playing Fields Policy, subject to conditions relating to hours of use and the submission of a community use agreement.

Sport England has consulted the Football Association (FA) and England Hockey (EH) on these proposals. They have responded as follows:

FA – the FA are supportive of this application. There is a need for the facilities in the area and the FA are working closely with ARU to deliver the project. The Cambridge/South Cambs PPS supports the development of a 3G pitch at this site. Discussions have taken place regarding the potential for Cambs FA to deliver football development programmes from this site and there are close links between ARU and a local club (Girton Colts). The FA are satisfied that the technical details meet FA requirements.

England Hockey - support the proposal as it will help address ongoing capacity issues with hockey pitches in the Cambridge area, though England Hockey would not part fund the facility given the restrictions proposed on community use. In technical terms England Hockey recommend a higher dividing fence between the two AGPs in order to reduce potential injury from hockey balls entering the football pitch. Sport England therefore recommends that further consideration is given to this technical issue.

This application relates to the provision of a new indoor/outdoor sports facility or facilities on the existing playing field at the above site. It therefore needs to be considered against exception E5 of the above policy, which states:

- E5 - The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the

development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

I have therefore assessed the existing and proposed playing fields against the above policy to determine whether the proposals meet exception E5.

In strategic terms a Playing Pitch Strategy for Cambridge/South Cambs to inform the decision making process was finalised in early 2016. This identified a specific need for additional 3G AGP provision in the Cambridge area to meet the needs of football, particularly with regard to midweek training requirements.

Sport England did an assessment of AGP provision in Cambridge, using national data, in 2014 which highlighted a lack of 3G pitches in the Cambridge area. Overall unmet demand was calculated at 1.5 pitches in Cambridge and 0.9 pitches in South Cambs. Pitches in Cambridge were operating at 100% capacity, whilst in South Cambs the figure was 91%.

The above figures indicate a general need for more AGP provision in the wider Cambridge area, and a more pressing need for 3G provision to meet the need for specific football facilities. It is therefore considered that this proposal can help to meet this need provided community access to the facilities is secured.

It is also considered that the proposed new pavilion/changing room block broadly meets Sport England technical guidance, therefore no objection is raised to this element of the scheme. It should be noted that the changing rooms will serve the rugby pitches to the south-west of them as well as the artificial and grass pitches on the main site.

The proposals will offer enhanced potential for the site to be used for wider community use in addition to university use. It is therefore considered that any planning consent should be subject of a planning condition requiring a community use agreement (CUA) to be signed. The applicant has indicated a willingness to accept such a condition.

With regard to hours of use, Sport England normally requests that floodlit community sports facilities should be available for use until 10pm at peak times (weekday evenings) with reduced hours at weekends. Such hours should only be reduced if there are strong residential amenity reasons for this course of action. In this instance there are concerns from residents of adjoining properties, and therefore the applicant has submitted revised proposed hours of use to help address this issue with the AGPs only being used to 9pm on weekday evenings.

In policy terms, in this instance, Sport England is still satisfied that the proposal meets exception E5 of the above policy, in that the proposal is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility(ies), where the benefit to the development of sport would outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of playing field.

This being the case, Sport England considers that these new facilities can make a positive contribution to sport in Cambridge for both university and local community. We therefore wish to support this application, subject to the following condition(s) being attached to the decision notice (if the Council are minded to approve the application):

1. Unless otherwise agreed in advance and in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England], the artificial pitches and its

associated sports lighting shall not be used outside the hours of:

- (a) 8 am to 9pm Monday to Friday;
- (b) 8 am to 7pm Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

2. Use of the development shall not commence until a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to the two proposed artificial pitches on this site and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-university users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, and anything else which the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England considers necessary in order to secure the effective community use of the facilities. The development shall not be used at any time other than in strict compliance with the approved agreement.
28. **Assets and Definitive Maps Team (taken from previous scheme)** - Public Footpath No.48 Cambridge shares the site access. The proposal will slightly increase traffic along the footpath, but this footpath is already shared with traffic for some its route. No significant objections but informatives should be included in any consent regarding protection of the right of way.
29. **Sustainability Officer** - The development appears to meet the expectations of local policy by achieving a 10.62% reduction in carbon emission using air source heat pump technology and solar thermal hot water. The applicant supplies full BRUKL Output calculations to support this. The applicant has stated that specifications are subject to change but is committed to continuing compliance checks to ensure the building satisfies that appropriate requirements. The applicant suggests that the building is on target to achieve a BREEAM 'Very good' rating. I would ask the applicant to provide pre-assessment documentation in evidence of this and full accreditation should be proven after construction.
30. **District Council Tree Officer** - This application is supported by a comprehensive and concise arboricultural impact assessment and tree protection plan / strategy that is fit for purpose. If this is complied with I have no concerns about the impact of the proposed development upon existing trees.

Representations

31. Roughly 16 letters of objection have been received to the planning application from residents. The following material planning concerns have been raised :
 - a) Current football pitches have not been used for 2 years
 - b) No pedestrian access into the site
 - c) Impact to the Green Belt and closure of the gap
 - d) Urbanisation of Girton Fringe
 - e) Very special circumstances not demonstrated
 - f) Alternative ARU site along Huntingdon Road should be considered
 - g) Use of Wilberforce Road Site - within City Council
 - h) Impact to wildlife species
 - i) Damage, nuisance and risk of injury from stray balls
 - j) Doesn't accord with the National Association of Local Councils

- k) Reconsider the location of the sports pitches so they are 25m from the boundary
- l) Willow trees not consider suitable along the boundary as they have large roots.
- m) Preference to single storey building
- n) ARU should link up with Darwin Green site to link up and provide facilities elsewhere.
- o) Reduce hours do not address the distance and noise issue
- p) Continue to be significant noise disturbance from spectators and players
- q) Foul language
- r) Noise levels over 90db (equivalent to a motorcycle) could be created
- s) Noise model adopted is not realistic
- t) Acoustic fence would not provide any noise reduction
- u) Significant intensification of the site and loss to residential amenity
- v) Acoustic fence should be situated to the AstroTurf pitches to reduce noise
- w) Cambridge City Housing, Darwin Green – approved May 2016 and not considered as part of the noise report
- x) The 21:30 finishing time is considered to be too late
- y) Acoustic fence would be better around the car park
- z) Noise from delivery vehicles and Lorries
- aa) Light up habitual rooms in the evening
- bb) Health concern from the lights
- cc) Increase in traffic to the site

Roughly 93 letters of support have been received to the application, of which 84 come from students/staff members of the university, others included representations from local residents, surrounding schools and sports groups. In summary following material planning comments were made :

- a) Sports facility will benefit students and local community and local children
- b) Increase health and social well being
- c) Free up other community facilities which are currently used by the university
- d) Within a good distance from the university campus on East Road
- e) Bring the community and university together
- f) Committed to being good neighbours
- g) Encourage more students to attend the university as it will look more attractive
- h) Improve on sports completions with other leading universities

Site and Surroundings

- 32. Howes Close Sports Ground is located to the west of Whitehouse Lane, north of the Huntingdon Road, Girton. The area, which extends to 5.15ha, currently comprises four adult grass football pitches, a small pavilion on the south west boundary and a gravelled parking area at the southern end of the site, and a training floodlight.
- 33. To the north west the site adjoins the rear gardens of properties in Thornton Close, Girton. There is some boundary planting and fencing on this boundary. To the south west the site adjoins Felix House Hotel. Beyond the north east boundary are farm buildings, on land which will form part of the Darwin Green development.
- 34. To the east the site adjoins the boundary with Cambridge City Council, and the premises of NIAB, which forms part of the site of the Darwin Green development. The Darwin Green site (joint site between city and south cambs) will come forward in three phases with potential to provide up to 3000 homes. The first phase (city council ref: 07/0003/OUT), beyond the eastern boundary of the site, has been approved which includes outline permission for; 1593 homes, primary school, retail units and outdoor

play space. A reserved matters application (city council ref: 15/1670/REM) has been subsequently approved within this phase for the local centre and which would be closest to this development.

35. The third phase of Darwin Green sits beyond the north-eastern boundary and at this present time no informed proposals have been presented. Whitehouse Lane continues to the north in the form of a public right of way, which also runs along the north east boundary of the site.

Anglia Ruskin University ("ARU") also owns an additional area of sports ground between the Felix Hotel and the Huntingdon Road. The site is outside the village framework and in the Cambridge Green Belt.

Proposal

36. The full planning application has been submitted following the refusal of an application by planning committee in November 2014. During this period planning and environmental health officers held pre-application discussions with the applicant and consultants to review the reason for refusal and to discuss how the issues raised could be addressed. This amended application has been submitted as a consequence of these discussions and drawing on the comments from the planning committee.
37. The application has been amended from the original scheme to mitigate noise, lighting and management concerns raised. In addition to these amendments, an extensive sequential test has been undertaken by the applicant to demonstrate that there are no other suitable, or viable sites exist elsewhere to deliver the proposed sports facilities in this scheme.
38. The application continues to propose the demolition of the existing pavilion and redevelopment of the site to provide two flood lit artificial pitches, new sports pavilion and parking area on the east side of the site. Two grassed pitches are provided on the west side of the site. Access will be from the existing entrance from Whitehouse Lane in the southeast corner of the site.
39. The first floor of the sports pavilion extends over a portion of the ground floor footprint and provides for a warm-up area, small kitchen and communal area, which includes a terraced area for spectators. Solar thermal panels are to be installed on the first floor section of the roof space. Air source heat pumps are to be located adjacent to the building.
40. Parking facilities would increase from 18 cars to 54 cars, as well as four additional spaces, which are capable of accommodating coach or minibus parking. A total of 96 cycle parking spaces would be provided between the new pavilion and Whitehouse Lane.
41. Whilst it's 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 (adjacent unit).
42. The application is accompanied by the following:
- Design and Access Statement
 - Planning Statement including sequential test
 - Flood Risk Assessment

- Transport Assessment
- Noise Impact Assessment Report
- Travel Plan
- Lighting Report and Spill Plan
- Visual Assessment
- Archaeological Evaluation
- Ecological Assessment (including Phase 1 Habitat Survey)
- Arboricultural Report
- Renewable Energy Statement
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Management Plan
- Geophysical Report

Planning Assessment

43. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are: Green Belt impact, residential amenity, noise, lighting, surface water and foul water drainage capacity, ecology, archaeology, access, parking and highway safety

Principle of Development

Principle of development (including Green Belt)

44. Paragraph 87 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Local adopted policy GB/1 also shares this main aim.
45. Paragraph 88 states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
46. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate, but lists exceptions, which includes 'provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'.
47. Paragraph 90 states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate development in the Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Engineering operations are referred to as falling within the scope of this paragraph.
48. The applicant's agent has expressed the view that the development qualifies against paragraph 89 by virtue of providing 'appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation'.
49. For the purposes of paragraph 89 and 90 it is considered the pavilion, fencing and lighting columns would constitute a 'building operation' within the Green Belt. The laying of the 3G pitches and vehicle parking area would constitute an 'engineering operation'. There would be no material change of use of the land as it has an established lawful use as a recreational ground, as submitted under planning application C/0486/67/O in 1967.

50. Together the proposed building and engineering operations comprise facilities for outdoor recreation and therefore looking at the provisions of paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF the main consideration in determining whether the proposed development does not represent inappropriate development is whether it preserves the openness of the Green Belt, and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Policy GB/5 echoes this policy aim and supports proposals in the Green Belt that provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, appropriate to the Green Belt, where they do not harm the objectives of the Green Belt.
51. The site forms part of a narrow area of land between the edge of Girton and Cambridge. Although the site cannot be viewed from Huntingdon Road the existence of a public right away along two boundaries of the site means that the potential for the site to be viewed is increased. The existing pavilion building and car parking area are located at the southwest end of the site, with the remaining land being open. 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 depending on the angle from which it is viewed. For these reasons, officers consider the proposed development would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
52. Turning to the impact of the development on the purposes of the Green Belt, this must be assessed in accordance with the relevant national Green Belt purposes and local Green Belt purposes, as follows:
- NPPF (Para. 80)
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
53. Local Green Belt Purposes (Policy ST/1)
- to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;
 - to maintain and enhance the quality of its setting;
 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.
54. Due to the intensification of the use of the site, the proposed development would cause a degree of harm to the purposes of the Green Belt, predominantly encroachment into to the countryside and reducing the separation between Girton and the City of Cambridge. However, the site has an established use as recreational grounds and already contains existing facilities including the pavilion and some floodlights.
55. Nonetheless, for the reasons presented above officers conclude the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, by definition. Such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The applicant is therefore required to demonstrate there are very special circumstances that clearly outweigh this in principle harm to the Green Belt and any other harm, as per para. 88 of the NPPF. The extent of the additional harm is assessed below.

Any other harm

Visual Amenities of the Green Belt and Local Character

56. The site in its current less intensely developed form provides an important gap between Girton and the edge of Cambridge. This is acknowledged within the Council's Green Belt study (2015). It goes on to state that development within this area would compromise the separation between Cambridge and Girton, as well as Girton's identity as a separate settlement, however the report does go on to state that this sub area comprises a hotel and existing sports facilities and does not contribute to the character or rural setting of Girton. The vegetation around these pitches is important elements in the sub area, which contribute to the feeling of undeveloped separation between Cambridge and Girton.
57. This was highlighted through the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application and confirmed by the Councils Landscape Officer.
58. The character of the whole area will be changed by other proposed development in the immediate area including the Darwin Green development site to the east and south. The sports ground will be enclosed by development on all sides with the retention of existing boundary treatments and therefore the visual impact of the proposed development on the wider area will be more restricted than some other sites on the edge of Cambridge city.
59. Although officers are of the view that the wider visual impact of the lighting columns will be limited during the day, there will be an increased impact when the floodlights are in use. The applicant accepts the need for a restriction on the hours of use of the floodlights and this is considered in more detail under residential amenity below.
60. Given this time restriction of 21:00 hours during the week and 19:00 hours at weekends, and the ability to control the type and direction of lighting to limit light spill, officers are of the view that it would be possible to reduce the potential visual impact on the Green Belt to an acceptable degree.

Impact to Residential Amenity

61. The proposed development has the potential to significantly increase the level of use of the site, and as a result the impact on adjoining residents. At present the use of the site is limited, although residents have highlighted concerns as a result of the existing level of use. The site has consent for training floodlights near the existing pavilion and these can be used until 21:00 hours. However these are fewer in number (only one at present) and lower in height.
62. The artificial pitches will be sited between 50m and 70m from the boundary of existing properties in Thornton Close. Beyond the other side of Whithouse Lane, the Darwin Green site will provide a green corridor of trees, a new access road, beyond which will be residential housing blocks and a supermarket car park. Whilst nothing has been built to date, the 3G pitches will sit plus 60m from the frontage of the proposed residential units.
63. The non-illuminated training pitch and grass football pitch will sit roughly 5m from the shared boundary. The car parking and pavilion will be a minimum of 100m from Thornton Close.

Lighting

64. Paragraph 125 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that by encouraging

good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

65. Policy NE/14 of the adopted local development framework states that development proposals which include external lighting should ensure that, the proposed lighting scheme is the minimum required for reasons of public safety and security, there is no light spillage above the horizontal and there is no unacceptable adverse impact on neighbouring amenity of near by properties or on the surrounding countryside.
66. In the previous application, the Environmental Health Officer made comments in regards to the potential impact of lighting. It was recommended that in order to reduce potential impact to residential amenity the hours of illumination should be restricted to 21:00 hours. Officers took the view that this restriction was necessary in order to protect the impact to the neighbouring residents and the surrounding countryside.
67. In addition to this, the applicant confirmed that the lux levels proposed for the hockey pitch could not be reduced, but that those of the football pitch can be reduced to 200 lux (with a 10% margin). Officers took the view that this reduction was acceptable and should be secured by condition. Despite these restrictions and recommendations by officers, the Planning Committee took the view that the proposal was unacceptable to residential amenity by reason of increase in the level of light pollution.
68. Unlike the previous application, the applicant has now submitted full details of the lighting columns that are to be implemented if permission is granted. The poles will be 15m in height and will sit around the edges of the two 3G pitches. The sheer height of the lighting columns will mean that the light will be predominantly directed down onto the pitches. The lights will contain internal baffles that will reduce the lights horizontal spill. A lighting spill plan has been submitted with the application which illustrates that at the point of the acoustic barrier, the cumulative lighting levels from the lights will reach 2 lux, which is the equivalent to the shine of the moonlight.
69. The hours of operation have also been reviewed and a cap of 21:00 hours on weekdays and 19:00 on weekends and bank holidays. In addition to this, the reduction in public use on this amended application will mean that during holiday periods and through the summer months the lighting columns will also have minimal use. This will ensure the flood lighting is only kept on to what is considered to be an absolute minimum.
70. To ensure the time restrictions are maintained by different users, it is proposed that a timer will be installed to the lighting columns to ensure all but one of the lights will turn off 5 minutes before the capped times. To allow for a buffer period, the additional light will turn off at the capped time.
71. By virtue of the sheer scale and nature of the floodlights, they will be visible from rear of neighbouring properties on Thornton Close and Darwin Green when they are switched on. However, due to the specification of the light, their capped time restriction, limited use during holiday periods and the distance from the shared boundary (50m-70m), officers do not consider the proposal would cause any nuisance or cause an unacceptable adverse impact and subject to the imposition of conditions protecting this level of amenity, the proposal is considered to accord with National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 125) and Local Development Framework policy NE/14.

Noise

72. Paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that Planning policies and decisions should aim to avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development; mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development, including through the use of conditions; recognise that development will often create some noise and existing businesses wanting to develop in continuance of their business should not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in nearby land uses since they were established; and identify and protect areas of tranquility which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.
73. Policy NE/15 of the Local Development Framework echoes the above and states that planning permission will not be granted for development which has an unacceptable adverse impact on indoor and outdoor acoustic environment and impact on countryside areas.
74. The application site lies on the edge of Cambridge, close to the A14, Huntingdon Road and will soon be surrounded by development linked to the Darwin Green site. The site is recognised as having an existing recreational use, albeit it is currently under-used due to the limited facilities on the site to meet the current needs of the university. As such, the area already experiences a certain level of background noise from vehicles and use of the playing pitches (when in occupation).
75. In accordance with paragraph 123 of the NPPF, it is recognised that development will often create some noise; however, officers consider the application needs demonstrate the additional noise levels will not be significant or adverse which would adversely affect living conditions of residential amenity.
76. The Councils Environmental Health Officer has comment on the difficulty of assessing potential impact from noise and that there is no clear cut national guidance or methodology that is applicable to sports venues on the same basis that has been set for industrial uses or transport infrastructure. As such, officers can only consider whether the methodology used is reasonable given all circumstances. The Councils Environmental Health Officer has identified that the proposed scheme should not exceed the BS 8233:2014, which states that it is 'desirable' for external amenity areas that noise should not exceed 50-55db.
77. In order to mitigate the concerns of members and local residents previously raised, pre-application discussions were held with the Councils Environmental Health Officer in order to achieve more robust predictions on the noise levels that are likely to be placed upon the residents at Thornton Close and surroundings as a result of the proposed development.
78. The amended scheme has included the provision of a 2.5m high acoustic fence, which stretches along the north western boundary of the site. The fence is a living willow weave fence, which will have an acoustic core to help provide an additional buffer between the residents and the recreation site. The fences around the pitches will not be effective or viable given that they would interfere with the games.
79. In terms of the hours of operation the applicants have confirmed that the proposed pavilion will be closed at 21:30 hours during the week and 19:30 at weekends and bank holidays. The first floor terrace will be close at 18:00 at any time of the year. The lit pitches will not be used before 09:00 and beyond 21:00 hours during the week and

19:00 hours at weekends or bank holidays. Between June-August the pitches will not be used beyond 18:00 at any time. The grass training pitches, which are situated closer to the shared boundary with residents at Thornton Close, will not be used past 18:00 hours at any time of the year. Delivery times and hours of construction can also be conditioned to reasonable day time hours.

80. A revised noise assessment has also been undertaken by Adrian James Acoustics Ltd (July 2016). The methodology consisted of the noise consultants visiting similar facilities in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire during football and hockey games. Noise equipment measured the levels of noise when taken from the side-lines of these games.
81. The weekday base levels taken on the site were at measured at 41-47db. Based on the measurements from other sports games, the noise levels from the site to the closest garden boundary of No.38-44 Thornton Close would increase by 0.6db during weekdays and 0.6db during weekday evenings. These levels will increase by 1.2db on weekend days and by 2.1db on weekend evenings. The noise from whistles will be heard above these levels; however, they will be intermittent.
82. During weekday time periods there is no increase in noise levels and during the weekend the increase in noise level would be minimal given the existing noise base line on the site. As such, the Environmental Health Officer agrees with the findings of the report that there would be no adverse impact, as the noise levels will generally be kept below 55db as guided within the BS 8233:2014 standard. It was requested that conditions are imposed to ensure the closure times are adhered to.
83. During the previous consultation process concerns were raised linked to the potential for swearing and misbehaviour from teams using the site. Whilst the planning process cannot control these factors, Anglia Ruskin University have submitted a Management Plan (dated July 2016) to clarify how the premises will be run and managed. The applicants have expressed willingness for this document to be conditioned to ensure effective management and running of the facility. In summary this document includes the following pledges:
 - restrict when facilities are used
 - member of staff present on site when ever it is in use
 - provide neighbours with a direct landline number to report any issues
 - restrict who can use the facility
 - terms and conditions of hire and code of conduct
 - automatic timer-switch for lights
 - to not install any bar facilities or take bookings for the pavilion as a commercial venue for parties
84. By virtue of the intensification to the site, local residents are going to see and hear a difference from its current under-used condition. However, by virtue of the existing base line noise levels, imposition of time restrictions and the careful management of the facility, both planning and environmental health officers consider, that the imposition of conditions will allow for recreational site to be utilised alongside the residential properties of Thornton Close, Hotel Felix and the Darwin Green site without causing any significant adverse impacts to their indoor and outdoor amenity spaces during the hours of use.
85. It is the view of officers that the noise levels have been minimised as far as reasonably practical and it would be unreasonable to assume that there should be no noise generated as a result of any development. The proposal is therefore considered

to accord with policy NE/15 of the adopted Local Development Framework and the paragraph 123 of the NPPF.

Overlooking

86. Given that the pavilion building is 100m from the boundary with properties in Thornton Close officers are of the view that the extent of any overlooking will not be unreasonable. Cambridge City Council has not objected to the application, officers having requested clarification that the potential impact of the development on future occupiers of the Darwin Green site in terms of overlooking within this area.

Highway Safety and Parking

87. The submitted Transport Assessment has considered the impacts of this development alongside that of Darwin Green. Subject to the details within the TA the local highways authority have raised no objections to the scheme. The lane leading down to the site is narrow, without formal footpaths and the proposed development has the potential to significantly increase the amount of traffic.
88. Enhanced access to the site from Whitehouse Lane is proposed as part of the application including new footpaths and can be secured by condition. The level of car parking proposed within the site has been increased to cater for the proposed additional use envisaged with an element being grass creates.
89. There will be 96 cycle parking spaces on site, although the scheme does not currently show these as being covered. A condition should be attached to any consent requiring secure covered cycle parking, and for the design to be agreed.
90. The proposal is therefore compliant with policy DP/3 which requires development to provide an appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise safety, enhanced public and community transport and cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

Design, layout and scale

91. The building is a modern part two-storey design, which will be brick at ground level with cladding above. The building will have thermal panels on the roof, which will take the total height to the top of the panels of 8m. Revisions have previously been made to the roof plan and elevations as suggested by the Design Enabling Panel.
92. As indicated by the applicant all boundary trees, hedgerows and trees of landscape interest are to be retained. No key characteristics, individual elements or features are to be removed. The site is relatively enclosed. As such, the new pavilion, fenced pitches and acoustic fencing would have a very limited visual and visual amenity impact. Due to the height of the flood light columns officers consider there would be some visual harm when they are switched on. Additional landscape details will be required to ensure the car parking area is enclosed from view and gaps between existing hedgerows are infilled.
93. In terms of the general scale the proposed building height will be in keeping with the surrounding built development heights, which include the hotel Felix and the adjacent commercial/academic units. As such, the pavilion will have a limited impact on the backdrop from Huntington Road and from Thornton Close.

94. Officers are of the view that the level of facilities provided within the building is reasonable to support the level of development proposed. The car parking area will be close to the main access and thus keeping the hard standing to a minimum.
95. Officers have requested details of the levels of the 3G pitches to ensure account has been given to existing ground levels of the site and to ensure the pitches do not protrude significantly above what would be considered reasonable. The plan demonstrates that to the north-east corner of the hockey pitch, where the ground levels are lower, there is likely to be need to be a gradient increase to the land levels up to the pitch. However, to the north-west corner of the football pitch the gradient is likely to be to be lowered down due to higher land levels. In principle there is no objections to this level of engineering operation, however, full details (including long sections) will be requested via condition.
96. The applicant has indicated that a minimum of 10% of the energy needs generated by the development can be secured through renewable sources. A condition will be required to ensure that the noise impact of any plant or equipment for any renewable energy provision such as air source heat pumps is fully assessed and any impact mitigated.
97. For the above reasons officers consider the proposed scheme to be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area in accordance with DP/2 of the Local Development Framework. A condition can be applied for a sample of the materials to be submitted.

Drainage and Flood Risk

98. The site is within Flood Zone 1 but due to the scale of development a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with the application. The site is bounded by a ditch on the north and east boundaries.

Surface water drainage

99. Cambridgeshire County Council as LLFRA have raised no objection to the application on the basis that the applicant has demonstrated that surface water can be dealt with on the site. A detailed surface water drainage scheme and management scheme should be submitted and should be based upon the principles of the agreed Flood Risk Assessment.
100. The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the application. The site is located within flood zone 1 and is therefore considered at a low risk of flooding. As Anglian Water and the LLFRA have not objected to the proposals in relation to the surface water run off rates if the development was permitted, it is considered that the applicant has demonstrated that flood risk would not increase (on or off site) beyond the existing situation, which is the requirement set out in national policy.

101. The conditions requested by the Environment Agency can be included in any consent.

Foul water drainage

102. Anglian Water has commented on the application and they have no objection to the

application in regards to foul water drainage capacity.

Ecology

103. The applicant has undertaken a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Protected Species Survey, and as a result of its recommendations a Nocturnal Bat Emergence Survey was conducted. Close inspection of the main building did reveal the occurrence of a fresh bat dropping believed to be from a brown long-eared bat. The building is thus considered to be a bat roost and a European Protected Species licence should be obtained prior to its demolition and subject to the imposition of a condition for mitigation measures.
104. Following the concerns raised by residents regarding the projection of the lighting and how this could impact protected wildlife species, the Councils Ecology Officer has reviewed the scheme. The reports identified that there was a low level of bat activity and any other protected wildlife species on and around the site. As such the site has not been considered to present high ecological value in order to place a holding objection to the scheme.
105. The lighting will be switched off by 21:00 in the evenings and as such this will go some way in protecting the northern tree boundary. Baffles will also be included within the light hoods to ensure the lighting is directed downwards rather than in a horizontal direction. Officers consider both mitigation measures will aid in reducing the impact to a reasonable degree.
106. The main report suggests that clearance work is undertaken outside bird breeding season and recommends ecological enhancements. Both aspects will be conditioned on any decision notice.

Archaeology

107. An archaeology dig has been undertaken on the application site. No remains were found and as such there is no request for a condition to be added to any consent.

Need for Very Special Circumstances

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.
109. The applicant does not agree with officer's view that the proposed development is inappropriate by definition but has, without prejudice to that view, set out their very special circumstances case. This is contained in the Planning Statement (chapter 7), as follows:
- Insufficient alternatives and pressing need for sports pitches
 - Health and social benefits
 - Educational benefits for students
 - University's need to compete
110. *Sporting need in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire*
Paragraph 73 of the NPPF states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well being of communities.
111. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. It goes on to state that information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.
112. Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have collaborated to prepare a Playing Pitch Strategy (May 2016) for the period of 2015-2031, for the Greater Cambridge Area. The document provides a guide to the future provision and management of sports pitches, built facilities and community use services, identifying existing need and the need generated by anticipated population growth, and an Action Plan in order to meet that need. It provides an evidence base to the Councils Emerging Local Plan. The strategy was guided by a steering group which included Sports England and representatives of sports governing bodies.
113. This strategy was reported to the Cambridge Development Plan Scrutiny Sub Committee on 2 June 2016 and endorsed at the South Cambridgeshire Planning Portfolio Holder meeting on 7 June 2016. They were both endorsed by both Councils as a material planning consideration in decision making with immediate effect. This identified need should be given significant weight in the determination of this application.
114. The report identifies that whilst there is sufficient capacity in certain facilities such as grass pitches within the two district areas, there is a notable shortage in all weather 3G pitches for which there continues to be a significant demand for. The report also emphasises the need to retain existing grass pitches to not worsen the supply. The strategy includes an Action Plan in order to meet the identified needs. The Action Plan identifies the enhancement of the facilities at Howes Close Sports Ground contribute to meeting the identified need for 3G pitches for hockey and football.
115. *Consideration of other sites*
The applicant has considered alternative sites as part of a sequential approach to site selection. The search area comprised a 4km radius from the University's East

Road campus which is considered to be a reasonable in terms of cycling distance. ARU has also considered their existing University-owned sites. Officers consider this approach is suitable given its use as a university facility which is within a sustainable and convenient distance to travel. ARU's main site on East Road, and other subsidiaries, does not benefit from outdoor sports facilities. Following the submission of a number of considered sites, officers consider there to be limited alternative opportunities in the area to create such facilities.

116. Comments from local residents have indicated that, in their view, there would be suitable alternatives including Wilberforce Road site, the alternative ARU Huntingdon Road site, the use of pitches on the Darwin Green site and an alternative site along the A14.
117. The Wilberforce Road site is owned by the University of Cambridge. The Playing Pitch Strategy has already placed priority on this site to develop 3 artificial grass pitch hockey facilities. As such, this would not be a suitable alternative location as both sites are required to meet an identified sporting need.
118. The site located to the front of Huntingdon Road, and south of the Hotel Felix, is currently used as a rugby pitch. This land is not considered to be of a suitable size for a new pavilion as well as the 3G pitches.
119. The Darwin Green site will eventually have recreational facilities linked to the new secondary school. Whilst they might be used for community use out of hours, they will not be available for ARU to utilise during the day when they have their matches, training and education programmes.
120. A site was put forward in the North West quadrant, adjacent to the A14. The site is also within the Green Belt and in a highly prominent and visible position. The site is currently open and undeveloped but is planned to make up part of the wider Darwin Green site. The site does not currently benefit from a sporting use unlike Howes Close and as such the harm would be greater to the Green Belt than the site presented in this application.

Health and social benefits

121. Paragraph 70 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments. It also seeks to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and to ensure that established facilities are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community.
122. Paragraph 80 adds that local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access and to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation.
123. The Councils' Playing Pitch Strategy, as mentioned above, recognises that the provision of increased facilities in the right locations can have significant benefits on health and wellbeing.
124. The available hours of community use of the facility has reduced from the previous application due to the imposition of early closing times during the week and weekends

to mitigate noise impact on surrounding residents and to ensure the facilities are managed effectively.

125. Notwithstanding this, the site will continue to allow access for local community clubs that sign up to a contract and code of conduct with ARU. A few clubs and schools in the district have already approached ARU and have submitted letters in support of the application. A draft programme was submitted with the Management Plan, which indicates that the 3G pitch will be available to use by other groups on Saturday mornings, Sunday afternoons and up to 6 o'clock during the week. The sand based pitch would be available on Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The grass based pitches will have availability throughout the week at varying times. The community use agreement will need to be finalised and as such a condition will need to be included in the event an application is approved.
126. In addition this, existing and future students/staff that attend or work at ARU could also be residents within Cambridge City or South Cambridge villages. All of which are likely to have a wide range of backgrounds and of different ages. As such the proposed development has the potential to bring a significant amount of health and social benefits to a wide range of groups through new employment, enhanced social interaction and increased health and fitness. These factors represent a significant public benefit to the scheme.

Need to compete

127. The Howes Close Sports Ground is within the ownership of the University and the proposed development of the all weather sports pitches will secure the quality of sports facilities that are needed for students to compete successfully with other universities and sports clubs.
128. Floodlighting is crucial to allow for training and events throughout winter months. ARU states that this enhanced sports access reflects the expectations that students hold for a University of this scale with a reputation for sports education, which it seeks to retain and enhance.
129. The application sets out four strategic themes from ARU's 'Active Anglia' strategy, and states that the proposed development is an important factor in achieving these themes, whilst also providing an essential resource for a number of sports related degrees that it offers, or would wish to offer.

Conclusion

130. The applicant has submitted a Statement of Community Involvement and Management Plan with the application. It is recognised that the enhanced sporting facilities that the development will provide will benefit to local groups, in addition to persons that have connections with ARU, and that these will include residents of both this District and Cambridge City. The enhanced facilities will contribute towards the sporting need in both authority area, which has been evidenced in the Councils Planning Pitch Strategy (between 2015 and 2031).
131. Officers are of the view that the issues in this case are finely balanced. As a matter of fact, the proposed development will have some impact on the openness of this part of the Cambridge Green Belt, its purposes and the reasons for including land within it. This is mitigated to some extent by Policy GB/5 and paragraph 89 of the NPPF which support the appropriate provision of facilities for sport in the Green Belt. No overriding harm from the key concerns of noise and lighting have been identified that cannot be

controlled through the use of appropriate safeguarding conditions.

132. Essentially, it is the social and health benefit of the proposals, the enhanced sports facilities for ARU and the wider public use and the lack of alternative sites that collectively form very special circumstances in this instance.
133. Officers are therefore of the view that the applicant has demonstrated, in this revised application, the necessary very special circumstances that clearly outweigh the in principle harm to the Green Belt and the other limited harm in accordance with paragraph 88 of the NPPF.
134. Should Members be minded to support the application, it would need to be referred to the Secretary of State in accordance with the Consultation Direction 2009.

Recommendation

135. Officers recommend that the Committee grants planning permission, with delegated powers to refer the application to the Secretary of State subject to the following:

Draft conditions

- 136.
- (a) 3 year time limit
 - (b) Approved drawings
 - (c) Landscaping details
 - (d) Tree/hedge protection compliance and management details of the willow fence
 - (e) External materials
 - (f) Boundary treatment implementation
 - (g) Surface water drainage details and maintenance
 - (h) Foul Water Drainage
 - (i) Management and running of the site undertaken in accordance with the submitted Management Plan (July 2016)
 - (j) Hours of operation of floodlights and 3G pitch use – restrict to 9:00hrs to 21:00hrs (Monday-Friday) and 09:00 to 19:00hrs (Saturday-Sunday and bank holidays)
 - (k) Restriction on use of training grass pitches to 09:00hrs to 18:00hrs all year
 - (l) Restrict use of pavilion to 09:00hrs to 22:00hrs (Monday-Friday) and 09:00hrs to 19:30hrs (Saturday- Sunday and bank holidays)
 - (m) Noise restrictions during construction
 - (n) Lighting detail compliance condition
 - (o) Restrict lux levels to 200 on artificial football pitch
 - (p) Ecology measures – Bat roost and bird nesting condition
 - (q) Covered cycle parking
 - (r) Footpath provision linking to Huntingdon Road
 - (s) Restriction on hours of power driven machinery during demolition and construction
 - (t) Highway conditions
 - (u) Community use agreement condition for the 3G pitches
 - (v) BREEME condition – compliance
 - (w) Details of levels of the 3G pitches

Informative

1. Contamination
2. Protection of the public right of way during construction

Background Papers:

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission 2014
- Planning File Reference: S/2084/16/FL

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