

3/08/0682/FP – Retrospective application for the creation of a haul road and retention of road for access for maintenance and emergency vehicles to the hockey pitch at Bishop’s Stortford College Playing Fields, Off Great Hadham Road, Bishop’s Stortford, for Bishop’s Stortford College

Date of Receipt: 26.02.2009

Type: Full

Parish: BISHOP’S STORTFORD

Ward: BISHOP’S STORTFORD - SILVERLEYS

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions :

1. Three Year Time Limit (IT12)
2. The use of the access road hereby permitted shall be limited solely to purposes connected with the maintenance of the playing fields or emergency vehicle access and for no other purposes unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To limit the use of the access road in the interests of safeguarding the amenities of the occupants of Claypits Farm House.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies GBC1, LRC1, ENV1 & ENV2. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

_____ (068208FP.SE)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract. The Bishop’s Stortford College site is located to the west of Bishop’s Stortford town centre. The main complex of buildings at the College are located in the north-east corner of the site adjacent to Maze Green Road. To the south and west of the buildings are the playing fields, and it is within this area that the haul/access road is located.

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- 1.2 This application seeks retrospective permission for the haul road which was created for the purpose of accessing land within the College grounds to construct an artificial turf hockey pitch approved under LPA reference 3/07/1634/FP in 2007. On completion of the construction of the hockey pitch it is proposed to resurface the haul road with rolled crushed stone with the aim of providing an access route to the pitch for maintenance purposes and emergency vehicles. The finished road is proposed to be 3 metres wide and 355 metres long, and will run from the existing access track into the College grounds from Great Hadham Road, along the southern and western boundary of the Pre-preparatory school, and then run parallel with the existing path joining the College with the hockey pitch, which is a public right of way.
- 1.3 The application site is designated within the Local Plan as being within the Metropolitan Green Belt and as existing playing fields.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 The Bishop's Stortford College site has been the subject of a number of planning applications in recent years. However, the following application is considered to be relevant to the consideration of this application:

- 3/07/1634/FP
Conversion of existing hard-porous hockey pitch to a synthetic pitch, with full-sized safety margins, floodlighting and fencing. Provision of a bund to screen and shelter the pitch. Change of surfacing on footpath (Approved 27th September 2007)

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1. County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission and comment that it is acceptable in a highway context due to the site being remote from the public access, and that its proposed use as a route for maintenance and emergency vehicles will have no detrimental implication in terms of capacity or highway safety concerns.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 Bishop's Stortford Town Council has no objections to this application.

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

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5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The main policies relevant to the consideration of this application are East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007 policies:

GBC1	Appropriate Development within the Green Belt
LRC1	Sport and Recreation Facilities
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main considerations in relation to this application are:

- The principle of proposed development;
- The impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- Impact upon the amenities of the occupants of neighbouring residential areas.

Principle of Proposed Development

7.2 The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Policy GBC1 of the Local Plan sets out the types of development which are acceptable within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The construction of an access road is not one of the specified acceptable developments in the Green Belt, and therefore the proposed application would represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt. However, having regard to the nature of the proposed development it is considered that it would have a limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Having regard also to the need for the proposed access road, it is considered that in this instance very special circumstances exist to warrant a departure from policy.

7.3 With regards to policy LRC1 of the Local Plan consideration is given as to whether this proposal will result in the loss of a sport and recreation facility. It is Officers opinion that since the majority of this access road is located around the edge of the existing playing fields there will be no loss of outdoor sports facilities and therefore this proposal is in-line with the above policy.

Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

- 7.4 With regards to policy GBC1 of the Local Plan such engineering operations within the Green Belt will be inappropriate unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Policy ENV1 of the Local Plan expects development proposals to reflect local distinctiveness and to consider the impact of any loss of open land on the character and appearance of the locality, and on the recreational needs of the area. Finally, policy ENV2 states that development proposals will be expected to retain and enhance existing landscape features.
- 7.5 It is Officers opinion that the proposed access road will have minimal impact upon the open character of the Green Belt. The access road is sited within the existing playing fields grounds which in themselves have existing paths, sports pitches and other developments typical to their surroundings. For this reason it is considered by Officers that this proposal will have minimal impact upon the character and appearance of the area and therefore would be in accordance with policies GBC1, ENV1 and ENV2 of the Local Plan.

Impact upon the amenities of the occupants of neighbouring residential areas

- 7.6 Consideration is given as to whether this access road will have a detrimental impact upon the occupants of the neighbouring dwellings. It is considered that, given the significant distance between the site and the neighbouring properties in Monkswood Drive and Lavender Close, there will be no significant impact upon the enjoyment of their properties either by loss of privacy or by noise nuisance caused by the use of the access road. Consideration has also been given to the occupants of Claypits Farm House since this access road runs adjacent to the boundary of this dwelling. It is Officers recommendation that this road is unlikely to be used frequently and although it is located in close proximity it would not cause a significant nuisance to the detriment of the occupants. For this reason it is recommended that this proposal accords with part (d) of policy ENV1 of the Local Plan.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 In conclusion, Officers consider that the proposal accords with the policies of the Local Plan and will not result in any detriment to the character of the locality or adversely affect the amenities of the neighbouring residents.
- 8.2 It is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.