

3/09/0919/RP – New sports hall, classroom building, all weather pitch, replacement tennis courts, extended hard play area, car parking and access works at Leventhorpe School, Cambridge Road, Sawbridgeworth for The Leventhorpe School

Date of Receipt: 16.06.2009

Type: Reserved Matters

Parish: SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Ward: SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Reason for report: Major Application

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three Year Time Limit (1T12)
2. Materials of Construction (2E11)
3. Cycle Parking Facilities (2E29)
4. Landscaping Design Proposals (4P12)
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5. Landscape Works Implementation (4P13)
6. Prior to the commencement of development, detailed drawings and specifications of the proposed fencing to the all weather pitch and the tennis courts, including the colour of the fencing, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the development and its impact on the adjacent Metropolitan Green Belt in accordance with policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

7. Prior to the commencement of the development, detailed drawings of the floodlighting columns including lighting specifications shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of the impact of the floodlights and light spillage on the surrounding rural area and nearby residential properties, in accordance with policy ENV24 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

3/09/0919/RP

8. The floodlights hereby permitted shall not be used before 08:00 or after 21:00 on any day of the week unless previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of rural character of the surrounding area and the nearby neighbouring properties, in accordance with ENV23 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

9. Prior to the commencement of the development, a plan outlining the summer and winter outdoor playing pitch layouts shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England, and thereafter implemented in accordance with the approved plan.

Reason: To ensure that the approved development does not impact upon the number and size of outdoor playing pitches that can be accommodated on the playing field.

Directives

1. Outline permission relationship (07OP)
Insert '24 November 2008' '3/07/1569/OP'

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 GBC1, GBC4, TR7, TR13, ENV1, ENV2, ENV4, ENV23, LRC1 and LRC2. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract. The application site, The Leventhorpe School, is located on the northern edge of the settlement of Sawbridgeworth and is accessed from Cambridge Road. The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt (policy GBC1), with the built up part of the site having been allocated in the Local Plan as a Major Developed Site (policy GBC4). The playing fields to the west of the school buildings are allocated in the Local Plan as existing playing fields (policy LRC1).

3/09/0919/RP

- 1.2 Outline planning permission was granted subject to a S106 agreement in November 2008 (ref. 3/07/1569/OP) for a new school sports hall, classroom building, all weather pitch, replacement tennis courts, extended hard play area, car parking and access works, and residential development of the land to the south of the school buildings. In relation to the outline application, all matters were reserved apart from access. This application for reserved matters follows the approval of the outline application, and seeks approval for the siting, design, external appearance of the building and landscaping of the site.
- 1.3 This application seeks approval of reserved matters for the erection of a sports hall, floodlit all weather pitch and tennis courts, including an extension to an existing hard play area, provision of car parking and improvements to the existing access track which runs along the northern boundary of the site. The sports hall is proposed to be located to the north-west of the existing group of school buildings, partly located on the site of the existing tennis courts and two portakabin buildings. The building is proposed to be a maximum height of 10 metres with a footprint of some 1545 square metres, and it has been designed with a zinc butterfly roof and is proposed to be constructed from a variety of materials including timber boarding, render and brickwork. It is proposed to provide within the building a 37 metre x 21 metre sports hall, with ancillary accommodation to the south and west of the hall, which includes changing facilities, a fitness suite, dance studio and an additional classroom. The sports hall has been designed to accommodate a variety of different sports including badminton, basketball, 6 a side cricket, 5 a side football, gymnastics, 7 a side hockey, netball, tennis and volleyball. The pitch/court size for these sports has been considered against the Sport England recommended space guidelines, and they all meet the recreational standards, the majority meet the club and county/regional standards, and some meet the national and international standards.
- 1.4 To the west of the proposed sports hall building, on the existing school playing fields it is proposed to provide 5 tennis courts, of which 3 can also be used for netball and 3 are proposed to be floodlit, and a floodlit all weather pitch which can be used for football and hockey up to a regional level. The floodlights for the all weather pitch are proposed to be to a maximum height of 15 metres, and those for the tennis courts to be a maximum height of 10 metres. Both of these facilities are proposed to be enclosed by a 3 metre high mesh fence.
- 1.5 This application is one of two which has been submitted for this site, the second of which is also being reported to this meeting of the Development Control Committee. The second application (ref. 3/09/0918/FP) seeks permission for a floodlit all weather pitch, 3 floodlit replacement tennis

courts and 2 tennis courts (not floodlit), and these are proposed to be sited on the existing school playing fields in a slightly different location to that proposed in this application. The location of pitches as proposed by the full planning application is the preferred location of the pitches, however due to an error by the Applicant in the drawing of the red site outline in the submission of the outline application, the preferred location for the pitches cannot be achieved in the reserved matters application. The Applicant has therefore had to submit the separate application for full planning permission for the location of the pitches in the preferred location.

2.0 Site History

2.1 As stated earlier in this report, outline planning permission was granted subject to a S106 agreement in November 2008 (ref. 3/07/1569/OP) for a new school sports hall, classroom building, all weather pitch, replacement tennis courts, extended hard play area, car parking and access works, and residential development of the land to the south of the school buildings. Whilst there have been a number of applications submitted for school related development on the site in recent years, these are not relevant to the consideration of this current application.

3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 Environmental Health have commented that any permission which the Planning Authority may give shall include conditions relating to construction hours of working, no external loudspeakers, dust, air quality reports, lighting, soil decontamination, refuse disposal facilities and piling works.

3.2 County Highways have commented that in a highways context this submission is in line with the considerable pre-application discussions and consultations that led to the outline approval. They comment that the proposal makes use of the existing school access onto Cambridge Road, the on-site vehicle parking and manoeuvring areas are satisfactory and any traffic generation will not be significant in terms of impact upon the existing traffic generation in and through Sawbridgeworth, particularly at peak hours. Having regard to these considerations, County Highways therefore recommend that they do not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission subject to conditions relating to the submission of details of the materials to be used for the access road and vehicle parking and turning areas; provision of space within the site for the parking, storage and delivery of materials associated with the construction of the development; the provision of wheel washing facilities and the provision of cycle storage.

3/09/0919/RP

- 3.3 The Historic Environment Unit, HCC have commented that the proposed development is such that there is a reasonable likelihood of significant archaeological remains being present, and therefore recommend that a condition is attached to any grant of permission requiring a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken.
- 3.4 Thames Water have commented that they have no observations to make.
- 3.5 The Environment Agency have commented that they have no comments on this application.
- 3.6 Sport England have commented as a statutory consultee that they have no objection to the application subject to a condition being placed on any grant of permission requiring the submission and approval of the playing pitch layout if the all weather pitch and tennis courts are implemented in accordance with the siting shown in the reserved matters application and the submission of details of the proposed floodlighting. As a non-statutory consultee, they have commented on the detailed use of the sports hall, the all weather pitch (whether the size of the pitches provided both within the hall and on the all weather pitch are suitable for county/regional competitions) and the relationship of the proposed car parking and the sports hall.
- 3.7 The Council's Landscape Officer has commented that the proposal would have no impact on trees. They comment that the new sports hall building will be visible from Parsonage Lane to the west of the site, but will be middle distant in terms of the visual area it will occupy. The building will also be visible from Cambridge Road, although it will be set back from the road and partially obscured by the cluster of associated school buildings. The orientation of the all weather pitch and its juxtaposition with the northern boundary of the site is poor, although the Officer comments that the proposals will enhance the site. The Landscape Officer recommends that consent be granted.

4.0 Town/Parish Council Representations

- 4.1 Sawbridgeworth Town Council has no objection to the application.

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.
- 5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The relevant Local Plan policies in this application include the following:-

GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
GBC4	Major Developed Sites
TR7	Car Parking – Standards
TR13	Cycling – Facilities Provision (Non-residential)
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV4	Access for Disabled People
ENV23	Light Pollution and Floodlighting
LRC1	Sport and Recreation Facilities
LRC2	Joint Provision and Dual Use

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The principle of the proposed development was established by the grant of outline permission in November 2008. The proposed development is in conformity with conditions 4 and 5 of the outline permission, and accordingly it is therefore not necessary to consider the principle of the development. The main determining issues are therefore:

- The appropriateness of the design, size, scale and siting of the proposed sports hall;
- The siting, design and appearance of the proposed all weather pitch and tennis courts and their impact on the provision and layout of the required sports pitch provision for the school;
- Highways considerations, including car parking;
- Other matters and conditions.

The appropriateness of the design, size, scale and siting of the proposed sports hall

7.2 The size, scale and height of the sports hall building has very much been determined by the use of the building, and in particular the required court sizes for different sports and the necessary height clearance. The applicant has however ensured that the height and footprint of the building remains within the development parameters set by condition 4 of the outline permission which required that the building did not exceed 35 metres by 55 metres in area, and 10 metres in height.

- 7.3 It is acknowledged that the proposed building, due to the location of the site on the edge of the built up part of Sawbridgeworth, will be visible from land to the north of the application site and in particular from parts of Cambridge Road and Parsonage Lane. However, it is considered that the building has been designed with these views in mind, and the design approach particularly to the north facing elevation has attempted to address the impact that the building will have when viewed from the north. The butterfly roof design reduces the scale of the building, particularly when compared to a building with a traditional pitched roof, and the elevation has been broken into 9 bays alternating between brick and timber and brick and glass. In officers opinion, the design and use of materials in this elevation has been used effectively to break up and reduce the scale and mass of the building. Therefore, whilst the building will be visible from certain vantage points to the north of the site, the building will be seen within the context of the existing school buildings and surrounding landscaping, and would not be of a size, scale and design that would result in an unacceptable and harmful impact on the character and appearance of the locality or be contrary to policy ENV1 of the Local Plan. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Landscape Officer raises no objection to the proposed development and its impact on the surrounding landscape.
- 7.4 When viewed from the west the building will be seen as a two storey timber pavilion building, with the butterfly roof of the sports hall seen beyond. It is officer's opinion that this elevation complements its rural aspect, and is of an appropriate scale and design such that it would not have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the rural area to the west of the site.
- 7.5 The design of the south-western elevation reflects the links to the playing fields to west with the continuation of the timber pavilion, linking to a rendered block which reflects the existing character and appearance of the majority of the existing buildings on the school site. It is considered that the size and scale of these elements of the building are appropriate to the scale of the existing school buildings and would result in an acceptable relationship with the existing nearby school buildings.
- 7.6 In conclusion therefore, whilst the proposed sports hall building would be visible from some vantage points within the surrounding area, particularly from the north, officers consider that the design, size, scale and siting of the building is appropriate (taking into account also the proposed use of the building), and it would be of a high standard of design and layout and would not impact unacceptably on the character and appearance of the locality. The proposal would therefore accord with policy ENV1 of the Local Plan.

- 7.7 Furthermore, due to the distance of the building from nearby residential properties (the nearest residential properties being those in Cambridge Road and Cherry Gardens approximately 190 metres away), Officers are satisfied that the proposed building would not unacceptably impact upon their outlook, or result in an unacceptable impact on their amenities in terms of noise and disturbance.

The siting, design and appearance of the proposed all weather pitch and tennis courts and their impact on the provision and layout of the required sports pitch provision for the school

- 7.8 The proposed all weather pitch and tennis courts are in keeping with the existing use of the site, and would not impact detrimentally on the character and appearance of the site. The proposals will have a limited impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The fencing surrounding the pitches will only be partially visible from outside of the site due to the existing landscaping along the school's boundaries. Although the layout of the pitches as proposed in this application does result in a spread of development into the existing open and undeveloped playing fields, it is not considered that this spread of development would result in such significant harm to the character and appearance of the area to warrant refusal of the application. It should also be noted that whilst the Council's Landscape Officer has commented that the orientation of the all weather pitch and its relationship to the boundary of the site is poor, they do not state that it would result in an unacceptable impact on the landscape character of the area or recommend refusal of the application.
- 7.9 The proposed floodlighting to the pitches will however be visible from outside of the application site. It is proposed that four floodlighting columns of up to 10 metres high are erected around the proposed tennis courts, and 8 floodlighting columns of up to 15 metres high are erected around the all weather pitch. Policy ENV23 of the Local Plan outlines the necessary considerations when dealing with applications for external lighting schemes. It is considered that the number of floodlights proposed are appropriate to the operational purpose and size of the proposed courts/pitch. The floodlights are situated some distance from existing residential properties (approximately 200 metres), and Officers are satisfied that subject to appropriate conditions restricting the hours of operation and the specifications of the proposed floodlights, then the proposed floodlights would not result in any unacceptable impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties.
- 7.10 Being on the edge of the built-up area, the proposed floodlights will be visible from the Metropolitan Green Belt to the north and west of the application site, and when in use will impact upon these dark rural

landscapes. However, having regard to the above considerations, and the ability to control the time of operation of the floodlights, Officers are satisfied that the impact of the floodlights when in use on the rural area would not result in significant harm to warrant refusal of the application. Furthermore, when viewed from the north and west, the site will be seen in the context of the built-up area of Sawbridgeworth with its associated street lights and residential lighting. It should also be noted that Sawbridgeworth Football Club which is to the south of the application site, does also benefit from floodlights. Having regard therefore to the above considerations it is concluded that the proposed floodlights are acceptable and would accord with policy ENV23 of the Local Plan.

- 7.11 Sport England have raised some concerns with the outdoor pitch layout proposed by this application, and the impact that it would have on the existing playing pitch layout. They have commented that if permission were to be granted then a condition should be attached to ensure that the playing pitch layout is submitted and approved prior to construction to ensure that the necessary sports pitches can be provided within the site, and would not be compromised by the proposed location of the tennis courts and the all weather pitch. Officers are satisfied that subject to such a condition the concerns of Sport England can be overcome, and that sufficient space is available within the site for all the necessary sports pitches to be provided.

Highways considerations, including car parking

- 7.12 The access to the site, and the ability of the access to deal with the level of traffic associated with the development was considered and approved by the grant of outline planning permission in November 2008. Although it is acknowledged that the facilities proposed will result in an increase in the number of people accessing the site, this will be predominantly at times outside of the normal school day, and at times when traffic levels in the local area are lower. County Highways have raised no objection to the development and commented that any traffic generation will not be significant in terms of impact upon the existing traffic generation in and through Sawbridgeworth, particularly at peak hours. Furthermore, Officers are satisfied that any traffic generation associated with the development would not be at such a level that would result in an unacceptable impact on the amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential properties, and in particular those properties on Cambridge Road close to the application site.
- 7.13 The application proposes the creation of a total of 75 additional car parking spaces within the site, 30 to the north-east of the existing school buildings, and 45 to the west of the proposed sports hall building. Together with existing parking spaces to the east of the school buildings, a total of 94 parking spaces would be provided within the school's site. The Council's

3/09/0919/RP

adopted vehicle parking standards outlines that for a fitness centres/sports club of the size proposed, a maximum of 134 spaces should be provided. The total number of parking spaces proposed would equate to approximately 70% of the maximum parking requirements. Having regard to the location of the site, its proximity to existing public transport facilities and the ability of local residents to walk to the site, Officers are satisfied that the amount of parking spaces proposed are acceptable, and are unlikely to result in on street parking outside of the application site.

Other matters and conditions

- 7.14 It will be noted from section 3 of this report that many of the consultees who have commented on the application have recommended conditions to be attached to any grant of permission. Having considered these suggested conditions, other than those outlined at the head of the report, it would not be reasonable to apply the suggested conditions to an approval of reserved matters. These conditions should, if they were considered to be necessary or appropriate, have been attached to the grant of outline permission, and in some cases were in fact added e.g. archaeology.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The principle of this development was established by the grant of outline planning permission in November 2008. Officers consider that the details of the proposed sports hall building, all weather pitch and tennis courts are acceptable, and would not result in any unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, neighbour amenity or highway conditions or safety. Having regard therefore to the consideration set out in this report, it is recommend that this reserved matters application be approved.