

3/10/0776/FP – Replacement sports pavilion, resurface existing car park with porous tarmac and overspill car park to incorporate a cellular grass reinforcement system for durability at Presdales Community Sports Pavilion, Walnut Tree Walk, Ware for Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (East Herts Council)

Date of Receipt: 28.04.2010

Type: Full Permission - Minor

Parish: GREAT AMWELL / WARE

Ward: GREAT AMWELL / WARE - CHADWELL

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Materials of construction (2E11)
3. Lighting details (2E27)
4. Tree retention and protection (4P05)
5. Landscape design proposals (4P12 b,c,d,e,f,i,j,k,l, add to start "The overflow parking area shall be enclosed by a new hedge with protective rail.")
6. Landscape works implementation (4P13)
7. The use of the building shall be restricted to between the hours of 8am and 8pm.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the occupants of nearby properties.

Directives:

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. Public Rights of Way (18FD)

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 the 'saved' policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies SD2, GBC1,

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TR2, TR7, TR13, ENV1, ENV2, ENV4, ENV11 and LRC1. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies, and permission 3/07/0837/FP, 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 and comprises an established recreation ground, sports pavilion and car park located to the south of Ware. An overspill car park area already exists to the north of the main car park. The site is located in the Green Belt at the end of Walnut Tree Walk, a single track road and bridleway accessed off Hoe Lane.
- 1.2 The site is surrounded by open fields and woodland with Pinewood and Middleton schools located further west. There is a pair of privately owned semi-detached bungalows located immediately to the west of the car park. The recreation ground is designated as open space under policy LRC1, and the Post Wood Wildlife Site lies to the north of the sports pitches.
- 1.3 This application proposes to replace the existing run-down sports pavilion building with a new purpose built single storey modular pavilion, including 8 separate changing rooms, male and female toilets, showers and officials' room. The building will be of a similar footprint to the existing and is proposed to be timber clad with a pitched felt roof.
- 1.4 It is proposed to construct the building in two phases – the first phase would involve constructing the main part of the building with changing and shower facilities. The second phase, subject to funding, would involve an extension of a further 5.7m length to accommodate a new club room. The total length of the new building would therefore amount to approximately 37m, compared to 30m as existing.
- 1.5 The application has been referred to Committee as the applicant is East Herts Council.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 Permission was originally granted for dressing rooms and storage on site in 1952 (reference E/688-52), and consent was then granted in 1973 for an extension to the pavilion (reference E/3198-73).

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- 2.2 More recently, permission was granted for a much larger replacement pavilion in December 2006 and June 2007 under references 3/06/1968/FP and 3/07/0837/FP respectively. Both of these permissions included a two storey sports pavilion and club house with a floorspace of over 600m². This current application proposes a much reduced floorspace of approximately 340m².

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to conditions on protecting public rights of way, hard surfacing, and storage. They advise that although the access is single width, there are several passing bays along its length. Walnut Tree Walk also forms part of the Great Amwell no. 040 bridleway which should not be obstructed at any stage. It is not clear if the site will receive mini-buses and coaches, and whether a dedicated parking or turning area could be provided for these vehicles. Any additional parking, however, is unlikely to occur within the public highway and vehicle trips are unlikely to be significantly increased, therefore the Highway Authority would have no grounds to object to the proposal.
- 3.2 The Environment Agency raise no objection subject to a condition on foul and surface water drainage.
- 3.3 Sport England originally objected to the application on the grounds of insufficient information on summer playing pitches, and clarification on whether the cricket outfield boundary as shown on the proposed site plan is accurate. Further information has since been provided which addresses these concerns.

4.0 Town/Parish Council Representations

- 4.1 Ware Town Council comment that they support the application but need to improve signage to prevent parking in Walnut Tree Walk as residents get blocked in, plus Ware Town Council requests that East Herts Council improve signage re: dog fouling and provide bins.
- 4.2 At the time of writing this report, no response had been received from Great Amwell Parish Council.

5.0 Other Representations

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

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5.2 2 no. letters have been received from 2 Walnut Tree Walk raising the following points:

- Request reasonable working hours and no Sunday working;
- Residents' parking should remain outside No. 2 front gate – the wooden railing was put round by East Herts Council many years ago;
- Portable toilets should be put on site for workmen;
- Double yellow lines were put down 26.06.2009 but no waiting signs were taken away;
- Request a green rubbish bin to be put by the big exit gates where it can be seen;
- Request a speed hump to be put back in front of the exit gate where it used to be to cut down speeding traffic;
- The site notice was taken down 2.5 weeks before consultation closing date;

6.0 Policy

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

SD2	Settlement Hierarchy
GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
TR2	Access to New Developments
TR7	Car Parking – Standards
TR13	Cycling – Facilities Provision (Non-Residential)
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV4	Access for Disabled People
ENV11	Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
LRC1	Sport and Recreation Facilities

In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 1, (Delivering Sustainable Development), and Planning Policy Guidance 2 (Green Belts) are considerations within this application.

7.0 Considerations

Principle of Development

7.1 The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt wherein inappropriate development will not be permitted. Policy GBC1 does allow for the construction of essential small scale facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, and whilst this building could be considered to be essential, I do not consider it could reasonably be considered small scale. The proposal

therefore amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and very special circumstances must be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm caused by inappropriateness and any other harm.

- 7.2 In considering the circumstances in this case, considerable weight is given to the fact that permission was previously granted for a much larger two storey sports pavilion building, of which permission under 3/07/0837/FP remains extant. The building proposed in this current application is much smaller than that previously approved, with only 340m² floorspace compared to over 600m² previously approved. The proposed floorspace for Phase 1 is almost identical to the existing building, and the extension under Phase 2 would not be materially larger.
- 7.3 Further, the existing building is now dated, and is considered to be of poor design quality. The sports facilities are also in need of upgrading. Very special circumstances are therefore considered to exist in this case, which outweigh the harm caused in principle in the Green Belt. It is my Officer view that no further visual harm would arise to the Green Belt as a result of the development. The new building would be of a similar height to existing and would not encroach into the openness of the Green Belt.

Scale and Design

- 7.4 The building is proposed to be of a modular design, but externally timber clad with a dark grey tiled pitched roof. Sections of render will be used on the exterior to break up the timber cladding and provide some interest in the design of the building. A number of window and door openings are also proposed to provide some interest, including disabled access ramps to entrances on all elevations. Overall, the proposed building is considered to be of an appropriate and acceptable form of design.
- 7.5 As noted above, the scale will not differ significantly from the existing building and is therefore considered to be acceptable. Further, the building will be located in a similar location, with a mature tree screen to the south, where its visual impact will not be significant.

Parking and Access

- 7.6 No change is proposed to the existing access arrangements, and although the access track is single width there are sufficient passing places. The development would not result in a material increase in traffic movements and would therefore not affect the public highway.
- 7.7 In terms of parking, no additional space is proposed; however it is proposed to re-surface the existing parking areas. A total of 57 no. spaces would be available in the main parking area (inc. 3 no. disabled spaces), with space

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to accommodate a further 88 no. vehicles in the overflow area.

- 7.8 The main parking area would be surfaced in porous tarmac, with marked bays, whilst the overflow car park would be formed of a cellular grass reinforcement system with no bay markings. Although the tarmac would appear more urban than the existing earth surface, I do not consider that this would be unacceptable in this location, particularly given the existing hedge and tree screening of the car park.
- 7.9 The overflow car park will be surfaced with a grass reinforcement system which would allow grass to grow through, and provide a harder wearing surface. This was previously required by condition 4 of permission 3/07/0837/FP; however a condition was also added to require hedging to be planted around the overflow car park. This again is considered to be necessary in order to screen this car park from the open space and Green Belt beyond.

Designated Open Space

- 7.10 The proposed building will encroach slightly into designated recreation space, protected under policy LRC1. Although this will result in a small loss of outdoor recreation space, the building will provide improved indoor sports facilities. Sport England originally objected to the application on the grounds that the extended pavilion may extend into the cricket outfield boundary; however amended plans have been submitted confirming this is not the case. The development will not extend into any formal playing pitches, and the proposal is therefore considered to comply with LRC1.

Other Matters

- 7.11 The new building would be located at a distance of over 70m to the pair of private bungalows to the west, and would therefore not result in any harm by way of overlooking or loss of light. However, the use of the club room for evening social events would have the potential to significantly affect the amenities of these bungalows. As per consent 3/07/0837/FP, a condition is therefore recommended to restrict the use of the building to between 8am and 8pm.
- 7.12 There will be no impact on the designated Post Wood Wildlife Site given its location over 100m away.
- 7.13 Finally, a public footpath and bridleway runs to the south of the site along Walnut Tree Walk. The development will have no impact on this public right of way; however a Directive is recommended to ensure this is protected during the course of construction.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, although the proposed development is considered to amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, Officers consider that very special circumstances exist to outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness. Consent remains extant for a much larger two storey replacement pavilion building. Further, the existing facilities are in much need of improvement, and the proposed building does not differ significantly in size or scale compared to the existing building. The siting and scale of the building will not impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and the tree screen to the south of the site will protect the rural character of Walnut Tree Walk.
- 8.2 No harm would arise to neighbouring amenity, highway safety or the wildlife sites as a result of this development. A condition is recommended to protect existing trees to the south of the site, and further details will be required on hard and soft landscaping.
- 8.3 Although the development is proposed as a two phase scheme, Officers do not consider it necessary to control this phasing by way of a planning condition. Were phase 2 not to be constructed for funding reasons, the phase 1 building would be considered acceptable on its own.
- 8.4 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.