

5b 3/12/0314/FP – Installation of a 2nd synthetic turf pitch adjacent to existing artificial sports pitches/courts; installation of additional 6.5m high ball stop netting to protect a new grass football pitch to be marked on Lower Quitchells playing field; creation of two grassed rugby pitches and cricket square with outfield on Hailey Field at Haileybury College, Hertford, SG13 7NU for Paul Watkinson

Date of Receipt: 29.02.12

Type: Full – Major

Parish: HERTFORD HEATH

Ward: HERTFORD HEATH

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. 3 Year time limit (1T12)
2. Programme of archaeological work (2E02)
3. Approved plans (2E10) – SS1399 002 01; 005 01; 006 01; 003 01; 004 01; 007 01; 008 01 and HL250D15/2/AL5760
4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the materials of construction for the synthetic turf pitch and enclosures, and details of the means of drainage for the proposed rugby pitches, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter carried out and retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that the rugby pitches are of at least equivalent quality to the one it replaces in accordance with the aims and objectives of policy LRC1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

5. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a detailed implementation programme for the proposed rugby pitches and synthetic turf pitch shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter undertaken in accordance with the approved details

Reason: To ensure the replacement playing field is completed and operational within an acceptable timescale to ensure the continuity of playing field provision in accordance with the aims and objectives of policy LRC1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

3/12/0314/FP

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details shall be submitted in respect of the proposed floodlighting, to include hours of illumination and light levels (intensity and type). The development shall thereafter be operated in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To mitigation against the impacts of artificial light on the character of the Green Belt and in the interests of invertebrates and bats, in accordance with Policy GBC1, ENV13, ENV14 and ENV16 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

Directive:

1. Other legislation (010L)

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 GBC1, LRC1 ENV1, ENV2, ENV11, ENV13, ENV14, ENV16, BH1, BH2, BH3 and TR7) and the National Planning Policy Framework. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

_____ (120314.LP)

1.0 Background:

- 1.1 Haileybury College is sited to the south-east of the village boundary of Hertford Heath. The main Haileybury College is a substantial complex of listed buildings which fronts College Road. The application sites are shown on the attached Ordnance Survey Plan and can be summarised to be 3 general areas to the rear eastern end of the College ground, for:-
 - a synthetic turf pitch to the north-east of the College alongside the existing turf pitch and tennis dome/air hall;
 - a new football pitch and netting alongside the existing football pitch adjacent to the A10;
 - and 2 rugby pitches incorporating crickets squares sited off Hailey Lane.
- 1.2 Although the school itself is a Major Developed Site, the application sites

3/12/0314/FP

all lie within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The development is outside of designated LRC1 land (Sport and Recreation Facilities).

2.0 Site History:

2.1 There is vast planning history at the site. The most relevant to this application is as follows:

3/01/2003/FP – Creation of new play surface & fencing. Granted

3/87/1894/FP – Construction of synthetic grass sports pitch. Granted

3/85/0132/RP – Multi-purpose sports hall. Granted.

3/84/0088/OP – Sports Hall. Granted.

3.0 Consultation Responses:

3.1 The County Archaeology Section have commented that the development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on significant heritage assts and recommend that an archaeological condition be imposed on any approval.

3.2 Environmental Health have commented that they do not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

3.3 Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre have responded and commented in respect of the proposed lighting columns, suggesting that any planning permission shall include a condition to restrict the hours of illumination, lighting levels, column height, light spill and retention or planting of screening vegetation.

3.4 Sport England have commented with no objection subject to conditions for the specification of construction for the proposed playing field to be agreed and that the replacement playing field be constructed within a set timescale.

3.5 No comments have been received from the Councils Landscape Section, the County Planning Obligations Unit or the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

4.0 Parish Council Representations:

4.1 Hertford Heath Parish Council have made no comments.

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 'saved' Local Plan policies in this application include the following:

- GBC1 – Appropriate Development in the Green Belt;
- ENV1 – Design and Environmental Quality;
- ENV2 – Landscaping;
- ENV11 – Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees;
- ENV13 – Development and SSSI's
- ENV14 – Wildlife Sites
- ENV16 – Protected Species
- BH1, BH2 and BH3 – Archaeology and New Development, Evaluations and Assessments and Conditions and Agreements
- TR7 – Car Parking – Standards

6.2 Also of relevance is the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.0 Considerations:

7.1 The main planning considerations relevant to the determination of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development;
- Impact upon the local landscape character and openness of the Green Belt;
- Impact upon landscaping;
- Impact on neighbour amenities;
- Impact to protected species
- Impact on setting of listed buildings

Principle of development

7.2 The proposed development involves the installation of a synthetic turf pitch (with enclosures and 8 flood lights), a grass football pitch with high ball netting and the creation of two grassed rugby pitches and cricket square. The proposals do not involve the construction of new buildings,

but solely relate to the material change of use of land with associated engineering works, surfacing and fencing operations. In accordance with Policy GBC1 such operations and material change of use will be deemed inappropriate unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

- 7.3 The proposed use for sports pitches would maintain openness and would not conflict with the intentions of the National Planning Policy Framework or the purposes of including land within Green Belts. Indeed they provide for outdoor sports and recreation which is deemed by Policy GBC1 (if also essential and small scale) to be an appropriate use in the Green Belt and encouraged in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 81). No objection is therefore raised to the principle of the pitches.
- 7.4 In regards to the 8 floodlights proposed to the synthetic turf pitches, this would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and very special circumstances would be need to be demonstrated to outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness. No very special circumstances have specifically been put forward, however the submission information makes it clear that the lighting is needed to support the viability of the development creating relatively limited impact on the locality. In this instance Officers are content that this does clearly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt and amounts to the required very special circumstances.
- 7.5 Also in relation to the consideration of the principle of development is the potential loss of the existing grass playing pitch – due to the proposed synthetic turf pitch. However, as the proposal merely alters the use of a playing field to another sport and recreational facility, and as further alternative facilities in the form of the rugby pitches are proposed on site being at least equivalent in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, there is no conflict with Sport England. They do however recommend a condition with regards to timescales to be agreed for the replacement rugby pitches to be constructed to ensure that they would materialise as a replacement for the pitch lost by the synthetic turf pitch.

Impact upon the local landscape character and openness of the Green Belt

- 7.6 By the nature of the proposals, in the main they maintain openness, and although the use may well be appropriate in principle, it is necessary to assess the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Green Belt.
- 7.7 In regards to the proposed artificial turf pitch, this will be on the existing

rugby pitch, wherein the pitch surface although of different materials will have a relatively similar appearance to the existing and so no objection is raised to this element. The main consideration is in terms of the enclosure which will match that used for the existing synthetic pitch. Given that the pitch is sited alongside the existing artificial pitch and within the context of the existing air hall, no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the locality would occur.

- 7.8 The more controversial element of the synthetic pitch is in regards to the proposed flood lights and acceptability of this on the character and appearance of the Green Belt. Looking at the detail of the lighting, due to the relatively limited height at 15 metres, lighting design which reduces light overspill and glare, together with the siting near other buildings would ensure that the intrusion into the surrounding area is minimal.
- 7.9 In regards to the proposed additional football pitch, this would continue on from the existing football pitch wherein the land already has the appearance of a level playing pitch. The continuation of the 6.5 metre ball stop netting to the proposed pitch would have an open appearance and together with its siting behind existing landscaping, would have no adverse impact to the character and appearance of the Green Belt. The change of use of agricultural land to provide for the proposed rugby pitches and cricket pitch would equally maintain openness and have no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the Green Belt.

Impact on neighbour amenities

- 7.10 The nearest neighbours to any of the development are the residential properties within The Meadows (at a distance of 30 metres from the proposed rugby pitches) and at 25-35 Hailey Lane which are owned by Haileybury College (at a distance of 12metres from the proposed rugby pitches). Given this distance, neither the proposed use nor the lighting which is proposed to the north side, will result in an adverse impact upon neighbour's amenity.

Impact to protected species

- 7.11 There is known ecological data for the site, part of Hertford Heath SSSI, Goldings Wood County Wildlife Site and Hailey Wood County Wildlife Site lie within the school grounds, and habitats within the school site support bats and within Hailey Wood support Hazel Dormouse. The change of use of the land is not considered to impact adversely upon protected species but it is the proposed lighting that has the potential to be most impacting to protected species.

3/12/0314/FP

7.12 Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre however raises no objection to this aspect, subject to the imposition of conditions in relating to the lighting specification and hours of operation. Officers consider the imposition of such a condition to be reasonable and necessary to mitigate against the impacts of artificial lighting.

Impact on setting of Listed Buildings

7.13 In regards to the setting of the nearby listed building, the main element of the proposals with the potential to impact is in regards to the floodlighting. Due to the siting of the floodlights in relation to the listed buildings on site; their specification of construction, designed to prevent overspill and glare; and as there are other floodlights nearer to the buildings than the proposal, it is not considered that the development would create an unacceptable impact to the setting of the listed building on the College site.

8.0 Conclusion:

8.1 The use of the land for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation represents appropriate development in the Green Belt and very special circumstances exists for the associated floodlighting. The overall development is sympathetic to the open, rural character of the site and no harm to the Green Belt would occur. No adverse neighbour impact or impact to the setting of the listed buildings on site is anticipated and subject to conditions as discussed above, no adverse impact would occur to protected species. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions at the commencement of this report.