

5L 3/10/1901/FP – Car park extension and re-grade earth mound at Hartham Leisure Centre, Hartham Lane, Hertford, SG14 1QR for Sports and Leisure Management Ltd.

Date of Receipt: 22.10.2010

Type: Full – Minor

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD - BENGEO

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Approved plans (2E10 – ARCH/2008-214/(-0)003/A, ARCH/2008-214/(-0)004/A, ARCH/2008-214/(-0)005/A, ARCH/2008-214/(-0)006/A, ARCH/2008-214/(-0)007/A, BGC1/HARTHAM/TCP Rev 0, BGC1/HARTHAM/TPP Rev 0)
3. No further external lighting shall be provided without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and in accordance with policy ENV23 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

4. All existing trees and hedges shall be retained, and protected from damage as a result of works on the site in accordance with drawing BGC1/HARTHAM/TPP Rev 0 and relevant British Standards for the duration of the works on site. In the event that trees become damaged or otherwise defective within five years following contractual practical completion of the development, the Local Planning Authority shall be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and remedial action agreed and implemented. In the event that any tree dies or is removed without the prior consent of the Local Planning Authority, it shall be replaced as soon as is reasonably practicable and, in any case, by not later than the end of the first available planting season, with trees of such size, species and in such number and positions as may be agreed with the Authority.

Reason: To ensure the continuity of amenity afforded by existing trees, in accordance with policies ENV2 and ENV11 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

3/10/1901/FP

Directives

1. Other legislation (01OL)

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 SD2, TR7, ENV1, ENV2, ENV11, ENV19 and ENV23. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

_____ (190110FP.HS)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract and comprises an established leisure centre with indoor swimming pool, indoor courts and outdoor recreation space.
- 1.2 The site is located just outside the built-up area of Hertford and within the Green Belt and green finger of Hartham Common. The site and surroundings fall within the Hertford Conservation Area.
- 1.3 This application proposes to extend the existing car park to the east of the building to provide an additional 41 no. spaces. The central earth mound will be re-graded in order to achieve sufficient parking space whilst protecting existing trees.
- 1.4 The application has been brought to Committee as the leisure centre comes under East Herts District Council ownership. An earlier application to provide 46 no. additional parking spaces was withdrawn due to issues over impact on protected trees.

2.0 Site History

3/09/1948/FP Car park extension.

Withdrawn by applicant
04-Feb-2010

3/10/1901/FP

3/08/2089/FP	Windows and external fire escape, stairs to rear to serve new first floor gym and front and side elevation louvers.	Approved with Conditions 11-Mar-2009
3/98/1331/FP	Single storey gymnasium extension and single storey plant room extension with amendments to external car park area.	Approved with Conditions 14-Oct-1998
3/97/1258/RP	New dry facilities extension and alterations to Hartham.	Approved with Conditions 10-Dec-1997
3/97/0539/OP	New dry facilities extension and alterations to Hartham.	Approved with Conditions 30-Jul-1997
3/88/1436/DC	Conversion of existing outdoor pool to indoor use.	Approved with Conditions 214-Sep-1988

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The Council's Landscape Officer recommends consent. He comments that any impact on existing trees has been minimised and the materials and layout are acceptable.
- 3.2 The Environment Agency advise that although the development is within 20m of a watercourse, their concerns can be addressed by Standing Advice.
- 3.3 The Council's Conservation Officer recommends consent. She comments that "the principal attribute of this sub-area is its openness and green, semi-wild environment, the qualities which will be affected by the new car park with lighting. However, the parking will be screened by existing trees and hedgerows and the lighting has been designed to produce the least possible spillage and as it will contribute to the more efficient functioning of the leisure centre, which contributes to the amenity mix of the Conservation Area, it is my view that on balance this impact will be moderate."
- 3.4 No response has yet been received from County Highways; however they previously raised no objection to application 3/09/1948/FP following Officers' assessment of the parking provision on site.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 Hertford Town Council "objected to the loss of valuable green space for

3/10/1901/FP

public use as it was detrimental to the character of Hartham. The environmental impact of the new lighting columns and additional parking industrialises the natural open grassland available to the people of Hertford.”

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.
- 5.2 At the time of writing this report no letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy

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

SD2	Settlement Hierarchy
TR7	Car Parking - Standards
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV11	Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
ENV19	Development in Areas Liable to Flood
ENV23	Light Pollution and Floodlighting
BH6	New Developments in Conservation Areas

In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 1, (Delivering Sustainable Development), Planning Policy Guidance 2 (Green Belts), Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment), Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport), and Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) are considerations within this application.

7.0 Considerations

Principle of Development

- 7.1 The site lies within the Green Belt wherein policy GBC1 allows for changes of use and engineering operations as appropriate development provided they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Although the introduction of parked vehicles can impact on openness and encroach into the countryside, it is not considered that this development would conflict with these objectives. This is due to the existing enclosure of the site within mature hedge and tree screening and lack of wider views. Further, part of the site has already been developed through the introduction of a manmade earth mound during construction of

the original leisure centre.

- 7.2 The site lies adjacent to an established leisure centre and designated open space where car parking is not an uncommon form of development, and the enclosure of the site appears to lend itself to enabling a car park extension. Concerns raised by Hertford Town Council are noted; however it is not considered that this land is particularly valuable in its contribution to the character of Hartham common. No harm is therefore expected to arise to the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt as a result of this development, and it is therefore considered to be appropriate in principle.

Conservation Area

- 7.3 The site lies within the Hertford Conservation Area wherein new developments should be of a high quality to enhance the character and appearance of the area, and should respect open spaces, trees and important views. In this case the site is enclosed by mature trees and hedging which will serve to screen the visual impact of the car park from the wider area. The site is not considered to represent an important open space within the Conservation Area.
- 7.4 The hard surfacing is proposed to comprise porous tarmac for the access road, and interlocking permeable cellular paving grid system with gravel and marker pins for the parking spaces. These materials are considered to be appropriate and will also reduce surface water run-off. A condition is recommended to ensure retention of existing landscaping, and on this basis it is your Officers' view that no harm would arise to the Conservation Area as a result of this development, and no objection has been raised by the Council's Conservation Officer.
- 7.5 External lighting is proposed in the form of 4 no. columns, similar to the existing column lights, and a full lighting assessment has been submitted to indicate the expected spread of luminance. This level of lighting is considered to be appropriate for the safety and security of customers using the car park, and will not spread into the wider Green Belt, open space or Conservation Area. A condition is recommended to restrict any further lighting which may impact on the appearance of the surrounding area.

Access and Car Parking

- 7.6 Access to the car park will remain as existing, to the south of the leisure centre. In terms of parking provision, the site currently comprises an indoor swimming pool, courts, gym and outdoor sports pitches and tennis courts. When applying the Council's maximum parking standards, these facilities would necessitate a maximum of 191 spaces. There are currently approximately 56 parking spaces on site, with 41 additional spaces

3/10/1901/FP

proposed. This amounts to a total of 97 spaces which still falls well within the maximum parking standards for the site. Therefore whilst the site is located in close proximity to an existing pay and display car park, the parking provision is considered to be acceptable with regards to policy TR7 and Appendix II of the Local Plan.

- 7.7 Concerns have been raised over parking enforcement in this new car park as it may encourage people to park for free rather than pay at the adjacent pay and display car park. It is not considered necessary in a planning context to require enforcement of the system because the overall provision is considered to be acceptable. However, Leisure Services have indicated that they do intend to introduce a monitoring system to prevent misuse of the new car park.

Trees and Landscaping

- 7.8 One of the main issues in this case is the impact of the development on existing protected trees which border the site to the south and east. The previous application was withdrawn due to harm to these trees and the lack of a tree survey. A full tree survey has now been submitted along with tree constraints and tree protection plans, and the parking layout has been amended following pre-application discussions with the Council's Landscape Officer.
- 7.9 The parking spaces have now been positioned further away from the base of the trees, and a no dig construction method is to be used in these areas. On the basis of these amendments, the Landscape Officer now recommends consent of the application.
- 7.10 The application also proposes to re-grade the earth mound in order to provide sufficient space for the parking and turning of vehicles whilst protecting the trees. This involves the removal of earth approximately 2m from the south of the mound and re-depositing it on top of the mound thereby increasing its height by some 0.4m. This has enabled parking spaces to be located at a sufficient distance from the trees, and is not considered to be significant in terms of its visual impact.

Flood Risk

- 7.11 The site lies in a floodzone 2, and within 20m of a watercourse. No objection has been raised by the Environment Agency subject to their Standing Advice which the applicant has confirmed to comply with.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, the development is considered to amount to appropriate development in the Green Belt, and given the screening of the site will

3/10/1901/FP

cause no harm to the character or appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area, or visual amenity of the Green Belt.

- 8.2 The resultant parking provision falls within the Council's maximum standards, and the impact of the development on protected trees has been minimised.
- 8.3 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.