

**5h 3/10/2054/FP – Replacement Buntingford Scout Group headquarters at Buntingford Scout Group, Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford, SG9 9BT for Mrs Joanne McNamara**

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**Date of Receipt:** 17.01.2011

**Type:** Full – Minor

**Parish:** BUNTINGFORD

**Ward:** BUNTINGFORD

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Sample of materials (2E12)
3. Lighting details (2E27)
4. Hard surfacing (3V21)
5. Landscape design proposals (4P12) (Criteria (b) (c) (d) (f) (i) (j) (k) (l))
6. Landscape works implementation (4P13)
7. Approved plans (2E102) (09.14077.2, 09.14077.3, 09.14077.4, 09.14077.6, BSHQ3A, BSHQ4, Location Plan, Block Plan, Existing Site Plan)

**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 GBC3, LRC1, ENV1, ENV2, ENV23 and TR7. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

\_\_\_\_\_ (102054FP.LD)

**1.0 Background:**

- 1.1 The application site is located within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt on the north western edge of the settlement of Buntingford, as shown on the attached OS extract. It is also designated Sports and

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Recreation Land as defined in the adopted Local Plan.

- 1.2 The application site is bounded by Bowling Green Lane to the east, Edwinstree Middle School to the south and open playing fields to the north and west. The site comprises a single storey detached building, which is occupied by Buntingford Scout Group, and a smaller storage building. The buildings are part red brick, part rendered with corrugated flat roofs. At the front of the site is off-street parking for 1 to 2 vehicles and outdoor amenity space which is enclosed by a wire-mesh boundary fence.
- 1.3 The current proposal is for a replacement building for the Scout Group headquarters. The proposed single storey building would be 21 metres wide, 12.2 metres in depth and 3.9 metres in height to the ridge of the shallow pitched roof. The proposed building would occupy the site of the existing main building. However, it would have a floor area of 220.2 square metres (sq.m), resulting in an increase in the size of the building by approximately 65.7 sq.m. The applicant has indicated that the existing building is in a poor state of repair and beyond any reasonable refurbishment. The proposed replacement building would enable the erection of a modern and well equipped building that would support the existing and future activities of the existing Scout Group and other local community groups.
- 1.4 As part of the proposal, the existing building would be demolished, although this does not, in itself, require planning permission. It is also noted that the proposed replacement building would occupy a larger part of the existing Scout site, but the existing car parking space at the front of the site would be retained for future use.

### **2.0 Site History:**

- 2.1 Planning permission was originally granted for the scout building and storage facility in 1977 (LPA Ref: 3/77/1171/FP, 3/77/0352/FP) however, there is no other relevant planning history at the application site.

### **3.0 Consultation Responses:**

- 3.1 County Highways does not wish to restrict the grant of permission. They comment that the application is for a replacement building and there are no changes proposed to the access and pedestrian facilities. Furthermore, the existing car parking space would be retained within the site.

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3.2 Sport England raise no objections to the proposal. They comment that the proposed development would not appear to prejudice the use of the playing fields or other outdoor sports facilities. The grassed area at the front of the existing building which the development would encroach onto is not used for formal sport and would not be capable of being used for sport due to its limited size and the constraints imposed by the surrounding trees, building and car park.

#### **4.0 Town Council Representations:**

4.1 Buntingford Town Council raised no objections to the proposal.

#### **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:

GBC3	Appropriate Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV23	Light Pollution and Floodlighting
LRC1	Sport and Recreation Facilities
TR7	Car Parking – Standards

#### **7.0 Considerations:**

7.1 The determining issues in relation to this application are as follows:

- The principle of development within the Rural Area and on Sports and Recreational land;
- The impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- The provision of off-street vehicular parking;
- The impact of the proposed development on the amenities of local residents.

Principle of Development

- 7.2 The application site is designated as within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt in the Local Plan, wherein permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings or for changes of use other than for those purposes as specified within Policy GBC3. The proposed development does not fall within one of the specified developments or uses outlined in the Policy, and therefore constitutes a departure from the Local Plan.
- 7.3 However, it is necessary to consider whether there are 'other material considerations' in this case which would justify such a departure from Rural Area policy; and also to consider whether any harm would result from the proposed development.
- 7.4 Although lying within the Rural Area, the site is of course, very well related to the town; falling just outside the settlement boundary and surrounded on three sides by various forms of built development. The Scout headquarters has been in this location for many years and it is therefore part of the established character of the area. Officers do not consider therefore that the proposed development would result in any harm to the aims and objectives of Rural Area policy as expressed in the Local Plan.
- 7.5 The applicant has indicated that the current proposal would enable the provision of a new purpose-built facility that would support Buntingford Scout Group and other local communities groups, such as mother and toddler, dance and running clubs. It has been indicated within the Design and Access Statement that the existing building is in a poor state of repair and would require extensive works, including repairs to the rotten fenestration, new insulation, upgraded heating, toilet and kitchen facilities, to make the building fit for purpose. The applicant considers that, given the amount of works required to 'make good' the existing building, it is beyond any reasonable state of repair and in any event, the works required would be financially prohibitive for the Scout Group compared with the cost and benefit of a replacement building. Furthermore, the proposed building would provide additional facilities including a larger hall and store room, kitchen, and toilet/washrooms located away from the main entrance.
- 7.6 Officers consider that the community benefits of the proposed building are a material consideration in this case and, together with the visual improvement to the area that would result, would lend significant support to the proposal.

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7.7 It should be noted that the site is designated as a sport and recreation facility within the Local Plan (wherein Policy LRC1 of the adopted local Plan applies). However, it is considered that the application site, which is enclosed by boundary fencing, is separated from the surrounding playing fields and sports facilities, and has been for many years. There would therefore be no loss of existing playing fields in the area. It is acknowledged that the proposed replacement building would encroach onto part of the outdoor amenity space within the site (65.7 sq.m) but this is relatively modest in size and Sport England have commented that this area would not, in any event, be capable of being used for sport due to its limited size and the constraints imposed by the surrounding trees, building and car park. Officers therefore consider that the proposed increase in the size of the building would not be harmful to the provision of local outdoor sports and recreation facilities.

7.8 Therefore, whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed development would form a departure from Rural Area policy, having regard to all of the above matters; it is considered that there are other material planning considerations in this case that would justify a departure from policy.

#### The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

7.9 Officers also consider that although the replacement building would have a greater floor area than the existing building, it would maintain its limited height and would be of an appropriate scale and design. The replacement building would benefit from a pitched roof which would be more sympathetic to the visual character and appearance of the surrounding area, compared with the corrugated flat roof on the existing building.

7.10 Furthermore, it is considered that the southern boundary of the site benefits from boundary tree screening which would soften the impact of the replacement building from the surrounding area. Additional landscaping is also proposed by the applicant and relevant landscape conditions have therefore been recommended to ensure that any further soft landscaping is appropriate to the surrounding area in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

7.11 Having regard therefore to the limited impact of the replacement building on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable.

#### The provision of off-street vehicular parking

- 7.12 It has been noted that there is existing off-street car parking within the vicinity of the application site for up to 2 vehicles. Furthermore, it has been indicated that Buntingford Scout Group have shared access to the adjacent car park to the south of the application site which could accommodate approximately 20 vehicles. There would be no change to the overall parking provision at the site resulting from this development and officers consider that the replacement building is not likely to increase the number of vehicle movements into of out of the site that would be significant in terms of highway safety and visual impact on the surrounding residential area.
- 7.13 Furthermore, it is considered that the site is in close proximity to large residential areas, within convenient walking distance, and located close to Buntingford Town Centre which benefits from good access to public transport. It is therefore considered that the resultant size and location of the proposed development, together with the fact that the car parking provision has always been below SPD guidelines, would not be likely to give rise to parking problems or have a detrimental impact on the safe and free flow of traffic, in accordance with Policy TR7.
- 7.14 It is not considered reasonable or necessary therefore to require additional parking provision in this area.

**The impact of the proposal on the amenities of local residents**

- 7.15 The proposed building would be situated some 15 metres away from the adjacent dwellings along Bowling Green, Aylotts Close and Freman Drive. The proposed replacement building would maintain a low roof height and simple pitched roof design, which would limit its visual impact on nearby neighbouring occupiers. Furthermore, it is considered that the existing site is set back from the main road with some landscaping along the southern boundary of the site which partially screens the building from the surrounding area. As such, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to the amenities of nearby residential occupiers. However, careful consideration is required in respect of any lighting of the site and, in the interest of the visual amenities of the area; it is considered that a lighting details condition should be imposed.

**8.0 Conclusion:**

- 8.1 In summary, it is considered that there are material planning considerations in this case that justify a departure from Rural Area policy. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposal would not be

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detrimental to the visual quality of the area; to highway safety or to neighbour amenity.

- 8.2 It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out above.