

34/2007/057

MR JOHN HEBDITCH

ERECTION OF BUILDING TO HOUSE INDOOR NETBALL/TENNIS COURT, FORMATION OF THREE OUTDOOR NETBALL/TENNIS COURTS, ONE OUTDOOR NETBALL COURT AND SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH FOR FOOTBALL AND HOCKEY ALL FLOODLIT BY 16 X 10M HIGH FLOODLIGHT COLUMNS AT TAUNTON VALE SPORTS CLUB, GIPSY LANE, STAPLEGROVE

321854/126510

FULL

PROPOSAL

This application seeks to increase the sports facilities available at the site by the provision of a half size synthetic grass surfaced pitched for football and hockey and three outdoor netball/ tennis courts and one outdoor netball court all surfaced with porous coloured macadam and an indoor netball/tennis court.

The courts will be enclosed by 3m high green coloured weldmesh fencing with sections rising to 5m high behind the football goals. The new external facilities will be illuminated by 16 additional 10m high floodlight columns positioned in appropriate locations around the pitches.

These new courts will be located on a grassed area to the east of the existing floodlite hockey pitch and to the north of the overflow parking area. In this position they are close to the public footpath that flanks the east side of the site.

The indoor court is located in the southwest corner of the extended area some 50m to the east of the existing clubhouse. This will be contained within a steel portal frame measuring 37.60m long by 24.35m wide with a height of 7m to eaves 10m to ridge. Details of external materials indicate white profile steel cladding or membrane with precise details to be agreed with the LPA.

The proposal is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, a generic design proposal for the building, a Lighting Design for the facilities including illumination details, a Habitat and European Protected Species Survey and a Statement of Intent from the Club.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

PARISH COUNCIL – The aims behind the provision of these additional facilities are very commendable and are fully supported by Staplegrove Parish Council. However, the difficulties are the impact of a large 'warehouse' type building and the 16 extra flood lighting columns in a Green Wedge.

The new lighting is situated immediately adjacent to the existing floodlights and nearer to the houses in Whitmore Road. However it is thought that at 10m high it will be at a lower level than the existing and it could be argued that there will be

relatively little change to the current position when viewed from the east and west. There will be an increased width of light seen from the housing on Greenway Road. To minimise this effect the lights should be so wired as to ensure that only the courts/pitches in use are illuminated and that all flood lighting should be checked to see if it is possible to further restrict the spread of light to the surrounding area. All flood lighting must be switched off by the previous and currently quoted deadlines of 22:00 hours. This has not always been the case in the past. Additional tree planting would help in the long term.

The new netball building at 24.35m x 37.60m is twice the plan area of the existing clubhouse (18.00m x 25.90m) and its roof is shown 10.0m above the adjacent ground level. The clubhouse has been set down some 1.5/2m or so and its roof apex is 8.0m above existing ground level. The impact of the new building as currently proposed will therefore be very significant, particularly so if its fabric is white. A dark colour, (green?) would be much preferred.

It is assumed that the building has to be this size to serve its purpose and cannot be reduced at all but the Parish Council think that they must ask for it to be set down in the ground so that its roof is no higher than the clubhouse. This might make drainage more difficult but believe that this can be accommodated, as the car park area is lower.

With that provision the Parish Council would accept the development but make the point that additional large, tall buildings damage the green wedge status of the area, the maintenance of which is its overriding objective.

It is unfortunate that the drawings provided with the application did not include a plan showing the new building in relation to the existing. A drawing has been amended to show this detail

SPORT ENGLAND – We understand that the proposed development would enhance the existing facilities on the site as it will create a new concept in sports clubs provision through a multi sport ethos allowing five sports to focus on the site.

With hockey and cricket already located on the site the proposed development will allow the site to become both a county and regional focus for netball as it would be the central venue site for the Somerset County Junior and Senior Netball Leagues. The development will also benefit Staplegrove Youth Football Club who will use the synthetic turf pitch, and with the netball courts also being able to be used for tennis it is hoped that members will play tennis as a second sport therefore encouraging greater use of the new indoor Blackbrook facilities.

We have assessed the application in the light of our national playing fields policy 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England'. In our opinion, the proposals meet with the requirements of Exception 2 of our playing fields policy. In the light of this, Sport England **does not wish to objection** to this application.

The absence of an objection to this application in the context of the Town and Country Planning Acts, does not in any way commit Sport England's support for any related application or sports lottery funding.

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY – Views awaited

LIGHTING CONSULTANT – All light sources visible from adjacent adopted or private highways and housing must be fitted with shields similar to the recent successful installation at Queen's College.

If the light sources of the earlier adjacent floodlighting scheme are still visible from adjacent housing then they should also be fitted with shields similar to the recent successful installation at Queens' College.

As only four mounting positions have been used for lighting Courts 1 to 4 the uniformity may be lower than that calculated and the client should be made aware of the difference in illumination levels across the playing areas.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGENERATION MANAGER - No Observations to make

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER - No Observations to make

TOURISM OFFICER - No Observations to make.

LEISURE DEVELOPMENT TEAM MANAGER – I fully support the Club in what it is trying to achieve. The proposed facilities will ensure the Club is a regional focus for netball and will strengthen the Club in overall membership terms. The Multi Sport Club concept is consistent with what Sport England is trying to deliver and consistent with Taunton Deane Borough Council Sports Strategy aims.

Furthermore it will greatly assist and benefit the adjacent Staplegrove Youth Football Club who will be able to train on the ATP and will be able at last to leave their dilapidated portacabin (that serves as a changing room).

LANDSCAPE OFFICER - In my opinion the proposal will be detrimental to the character of the Green Wedge EN13. Any more development within this part of the designation will undermine its function considerably.

HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE - No Observations to make.

19 LETTERS OF OBJECTIONS - Have been received from surrounding residents. The principle points of concern in no particular order can be summarized as follows:

- Excessive light spill and pollution from existing lights.
- Existing lights have been left on all night, used outside designated hours and should be on a time switch.
- Residents would have liked to have been informed by the club about this proposal prior to submission.
- Concern that extra lights will add to and exacerbate this problem.
- Concern that Taunton Deane Borough Council have not enforced conditions of earlier permissions for floodlights.
- Increase in noise from extended facilities.

- Over development of the site.
- Impact of global warming.
- Will affect quiet enjoyment and privacy of gardens.
- Will affect quiet enjoyment of nearby allotment gardens.
- Increase in traffic and pollution.
- Concern about adequacy of car parking
- Possible adverse impact on wildlife as lizards and slow worms have been seen in the vicinity of the site.

Many residents also acknowledge that they do not object to the improved sports facilities.

POLICY CONTEXT

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation.

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Policy 1, 37 & 38

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, EC21, C3, C5 , EN13 & EN34

ASSESSMENT

This site is located towards the north of Taunton within an area identified as being subject to “Green Wedge” policy. This green wedge is practically surrounded by residential development with the exception of an open area at the northern end. The site of the Sports Club and the application site is also identified as an area of recreation open space to be protected under the provisions of Policy C3.

The new facilities are adjoined by a public footpath and cycleway on its eastern side that has screening along its eastern boundary. The rear gardens of residential properties fronting Wyndham Road and Whitmore Road are between 160m and 190m further to the east of this footpath separated by fields and with boundary screening. There are also residential properties in Cresswell Avenue some 220m to the south.

The applicants in support of their proposal have indicated that the scheme has been prepared in conjunction with Sport England, the All England Netball Association, the Lawn Tennis Association and the Football Foundation who all support the scheme and are providing funding. The aim is to provide a multi sports facility based around the existing pavilion enabling better use to be made of that building, improving the viability of the Club and giving a focus for the town and users of all ages.

The majority of the application proposal is located upon the position of an already approved full size hockey pitch that formed part of application 34/1998/009 for the clubhouse, sports pitches and floodlighting approved 1 June 2000. There is however a minor incursion into the overflow car parking area but this is not seen as significant.

Consequently in Policy terms no objections are raised to that element of the scheme.

The latest Wildlife Survey produced no evidence of any bats, reptiles or amphibians and considers that the site holds limited potential for wildlife. These conclusions indicate no impediment to the provision of the pitches as proposed.

However the proposal also provides for an increased level of flooding lighting to illuminate the additional pitches.

At Condition 20 of the original permission the following requirement with regard to floodlighting was imposed:

“The proposed floodlights luminaire shall be installed in a manner which ensures that no light source is visible from the adjacent residential properties, in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before the use hereby permitted is commenced. The floodlights shall not be commissioned until the expiration of 14 days following a notice given in writing to the Local Planning Authority. Within four weeks of commissioning, the developer shall carry out any modifications to the lights which may be found necessary following a supervised testing of the lights. During that period the lights shall remain switched off.
Reason: To protect the visual amenity of the nearby residents and the surrounding area.”

There was also, at Condition 15, a requirement that the floodlights should not remain on after 22:00hrs and limitations, at Condition 19, on hours of use of the clubhouse. Approved details pursuant to Condition 20 accepted No.8 15m high columns each with four floodlights around the pitch as already provided.

Concern about light spillage from these arrangements and the Local Authorities failure to resolve this issue has continued since their provision on site and has not yet been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

The application is supported by a Lighting Design scheme that shows minimal light spillage beyond the pitch areas. In clarification of the proposal, the applicants have also indicated that the floodlighting on the site, both existing and proposed, will incorporate an automatic “cut off” switch that will be set no later than 22:30hrs.

The views of the Councils Lighting Consultant as reported above have been provided to the applicants and their comments on those requirements are awaited.

The details submitted, with conditions to require the inclusion of an automatic cut-off switch and shielding to proposed and existing lights should address neighbours concerns about not only the additional floodlights proposed but problems with the existing ones. With these conditions it is considered that the application would comply with Policy EN34 (Control of External Lighting).

The other part of the proposal which conflicts with Adopted Plan Policy EN13 (Green Wedge) is the new building proposed to cover one of the courts. This building is

slightly higher to eaves and ridge than the existing clubhouse and significantly larger in plan area (as mentioned by the Parish Council). Consequently, it is inevitable that this structure will have an impact on the landscape and the character of the green wedge.

Any adverse impact needs to be considered in relation to the support for the retention of this facility given in Policy C3 and C5 along with the general tenant of PPG17 (Sports and Recreation) to support appropriate sports and recreation development.

The building to provide a covered court is intended to improve facilities here and because of its functional relationship to other uses on the site could be considered as an acceptable part of the total scheme. However appropriate landscaping and a careful choice of external materials would be required to help the building be assimilated into the it's setting.

With the existing and proposed pitch layout there appears little scope to locate the building closer to the clubhouse to reduce its impact.

RECOMMENDATION

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials for proposed building, landscaping scheme and completion, no floodlighting beyond 22:30hrs shielding to existing and proposed floodlighting.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The proposal is support by the provisions of PPG17 (Sports and Recreation) and not considered to adversely affect the amenities of the area and on balance not be contrary to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy EN13 (Green Wedge) or EN34 (Control of External Lighting).

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: 356454 MR M ROBERTS MON/TUE/THUR/FRI

NOTES: