

GREAT CORNARD – LAND OFF SPICERS WAY

Erection of new rugby clubhouse together with all associated facilities including all parking and manoeuvring and layout and levels of pitches. Construction of new vehicular access.

Applicants: Sudbury Rugby Union Football Club

Case Officer: Mrs Christine Thurlow

BACKGROUND

This application is presented to Development Committee at the request of one of the Local Members

SITE

1. The application site consists of an area of land approximately 2.7 hectares lying adjacent to the approved Persimmon development for 306 dwellings on the site of the former Sudbury Rugby Club(application reference B/03/1504/FUL). The site currently consists of a vacant area of land lying within the proposed flood compensation storage area for that development. A footpath runs adjacent to the site.
2. The existing pavilion/clubhouse lies adjacent to Great Cornard Upper School and to the south of residential development in Moorsfield.

PROPOSAL

3. The application proposes the erection of a new clubhouse (measuring 41 metres x 18.7 metres maximum) to the western edge of the site, with associated parking spaces for 97 cars (77 laid out and 22 overspill). One parking bay for a coach is also provided. The facilities to be provided within the building consist of:-
 - Changing rooms
 - Kitchen and storage/cellar/bar areas
 - Function room
 - Office and small shop
 - Lounge bar
 - Gymnasium
 - Plant room
 - Toilets
4. A 7 metre planting belt and acoustic fence are proposed to the western boundary. The existing hedge boundaries (North, East and South) are proposed to be retained and strengthened in landscaping terms.

5. The scheme also details the layout and levels of rugby pitches on the remainder of the ground.

The applicant's agent has submitted a Design and Access Statement to support the application which is summarised below:

- The Persimmon approval establishes the principle of relocating the Rugby Club facilities to within part of the area defined as Open space as shown in the Local Plan.
- The proposal respects the scale and density of surrounding development through the use of suitable materials, the siting of buildings and the boundary treatments/landscaping, the protection of existing natural landscape features and the provision for parking and turning of vehicles without conflict with the pedestrian and vehicular access to the site.
- The proposal has been designed so as to ensure that the compensatory floodplain land is not adversely affected. The indicative layout originally submitted by Persimmon potentially created problems with the Flood Plain and created problems with access to the Clubhouse if the land is flooded.
- The orientation of the building and the mitigating acoustic fence and landscape belt will minimise the adverse effects of any noise from the clubhouse on the residential development.
- Sport England requirements in terms of pitch sizes, layouts, orientations and accommodation requirements have been met.

The applicant has also submitted an acoustic report to address noise concerns raised by Environmental Health Officers and details of drainage strategy to address concerns raised by the Environment Agency. These documents can be seen via arrangement with the Case Officer.

RELEVANT HISTORY

6. There is much history relating to the development of the rugby club and the facility on their existing site and the residential development of the adjoining land (now being constructed by Persimmon). The comprehensive history references can be seen in full via arrangement with the Case Officer. The most relevant application to consideration of this case is:-
 - 2006 – Planning permission granted for erection of 306 dwellings and construction of vehicular accesses and estate roads. Provisions of new rugby club facilities and public open space (B03/01504/FUL).

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- **PPG17 – “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation”**
- **PPS25 – “Development and Flood Risk”**

- **PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation**

PLANNING POLICIES

The following Development Plan policies are applicable to the proposal:

Suffolk Structure Plan 2001

8. T10 – cycle parking .

Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2

9. RE01 – Sports facilities.
8. RE06 – Small and medium size recreation.
9. CN01 – Design standards.
12. TP15 – Parking in new development.
13. EN11 – Floodplains and Washlands.
14. CN02 – Facilities for the disabled.
15. TP01 – Pedestrians.
16. TP03 – Cycling.
17. EN25 – Noise.
18. CR01 – Landscaping quality.
19. EN22 – Light pollution.

OBSERVATIONS

20. PC (Great Cornard) – Object for the following reasons:-
 - The proposed rugby club is sited too close to adjacent houses,
 - The old rugby club caused problems for local residents from being too close to adjoining houses and from its only access being through residential roads, and
 - The proposed new clubhouse has a similar location and it should be moved to the far side of the site as indicated in the earlier plans.
21. LHA – recommends a footpath link from the clubhouse to the footway within the proposed estate development together with conditions as follows:
 - The gate should be at least 5 metres back from the new access road.
 - The new access to be laid out and completed before other development commences.

- Parking and turning areas to be laid out and completed before the use of the building commences.
- Surfacing of the access road shall be by a bound impervious material for a minimum distance of 15 metres from the edge of the metalled carriageway, the details of which are to be submitted and agreed prior to works commencing.

22. EA in summary – “We believe the proposed development may be encroaching on a previously agreed flood storage area. We therefore **OBJECT** to this development on flood risk grounds.

This concern should be addressed by examining more closely the area of flood storage land, and by quantifying the amount of flood storage provision.

We note from your drawing that the flood compensation land is outside the area you wish to develop, however we believe that previous drawings submitted as part of the Flood Risk Assessment for the Persimmon Homes development show that the area of the new clubhouse is actually within the compensatory storage area.

In view of this we require that a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is submitted as part of this planning application. The FRA should prove that this proposal would not result in any loss of flood storage, as it does not encroach on the previously agreed flood storage area.

In addition we have concerns over the surface water from the development. The information included as part of the planning application does state that the surface water from the club house will go into the attenuation lagoon provided as part of the Persimmon homes development. In principle this is acceptable, as we are aware that the lagoon was sized to take the surface water from the clubhouse however the FRA for this planning application must provide details on how the surface water from the clubhouse will enter this attenuation system. This will satisfy us that the surface water from the clubhouse will enter the lagoon and will therefore ensure that the runoff from the site will not be increased as a result of the development.

As we do not have the above information at present we must **OBJECT** to this planning application until a Flood Risk Assessment is submitted. This FRA must prove that the development will not reduce the area of the compensatory storage provided on the site and will not increase the runoff from the site.”

23. Natural England - no objections.
24. Suffolk Wildlife Trust – indicate that the site may provide habitat for Grass Snake, Lizards and Great Crested Newts. They recommend that all works proceed with caution and in respect of recognised best practice.
25. Third party representation. Two letters have been received from local residents commenting as follows:-
- No objection to the proposal but note that Great Cornard Parish Council have objected to its position on the grounds of noise and access from residential roads.

- It is vital that access and parking to the rugby club must not be from Blackhouse Lane, which already has to cope with the many cars accessing Cornard Utd Football club most weekends (when the car park is usually full and vehicles often park along the verge in front, which is vulnerable to collapse into the brook).
- The plans for the housing development along with the Rugby Club were approved with the inclusion of a public open space and substantial planting belt along the north side of Blackhouse Lane.
- It is important that access and parking to the rugby club must not, if any change is suggested to the above proposal in future, interfere with this planting belt.
- The open space and planting belt will help to maintain the nature of Blackhouse Lane as a country lane with an ancient hedgerow important to wildlife. Much wildlife, including 'red listed' farmland birds and reptiles, has already been displaced by the development and the planting belt will offer an important habitat. A recent year-long survey of the adjacent country park confirms the areas importance to wildlife.
- The brook which runs along the length of the lane and into Cornard Mere nature reserve needs to be protected and often has litter thrown into it by people using the football club. This problem would be exacerbated if access to the rugby club could also be gained from the lane.

26. Environmental Health – have now considered the acoustic report submitted under cover of the application and withdraw earlier objections to the scheme based on impact on residential amenity in favour of a recommendation of approval to this scheme subject to conditions as follows:-

- The clubhouse shall be constructed to conform to the specification contained in the acoustic report,
- All amplified music played within the venue shall only be played via an electronic limiter with a set noise level,
- All external doors and windows will be kept closed whilst music is playing
- No external music or implication at any time,
- Amplified music shall not be played between 23.00-8.00 hrs, and
- Noise emitted from the premises shall not exceed target criteria when measured against background noise levels.

27. Sport England – originally objected to the application on the grounds that they had concerns over the quality and quantity of provision of replacement facilities at the new site. However following discussions with the Rugby Club about both matters Sports England have now confirmed their withdrawal of their earlier objection and support the scheme (although they trust that the Rugby Club will pursue their current endeavours to secure a third pitch at or within close proximity to the site).

ASSESSMENT

28. The principle of relocating the Rugby Club pitches from their existing site at Moorsfield to this new location adjacent to Blackhouse Lane was provided for under Policy HSO8 and HS18 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No 2. It also formed part of the planning permission granted for the 306 dwellings off Bures Road, under cover of planning permission reference B/03/01504/FUL. Policy HS18 required the relocation of the Rugby Club as part of that policy, and the above referenced planning permission contained a condition which requires the submission of a planning application for the provision of any new Rugby Club buildings together with details of pitches. This planning application represents that submission.
29. The principal planning issues to be determined are therefore the:
- **Relationship to new (and existing) residential development,**
 - **Impact on visual amenity and design and landscape and biodiversity considerations,**
 - **Highway considerations, and**
 - **Compensatory flood storage and drainage considerations.**

Relationship to new (and existing) residential development

30. The siting of the existing building and its use have caused adverse impact on residential amenity in the past. The complaints have been about noise disturbance and parked cars in Moorsfield. In any relocation of this facility, it is clearly important to ensure that these problems are not repeated due to location or other factors.
31. A noise assessment has been submitted to prove the acoustic properties of the proposed building and to attenuate noise from the building once it is constructed. Environmental Health Officers now consider the proposal to be acceptable in these respects. Although there are concerns that noise disturbance could occur from use of the car park at anti-social hours close to the planned new residential development off Bures Road, the degree of separation between the car park and the rear elevations of the nearest dwellings measures approximately 8 metres. In between the car park and the dwellings, a 7 metre wide structural landscaping belt will be provided, which will offer some acoustic attenuation when planted and mature. Environmental Health Officers have recommended conditions controlling the use and hours of operation of the building and site, and subject to these conditions, no objection is raised in relation to the siting of the building in relation to impact on residential amenity.

Impact on visual amenity and design and landscape and biodiversity considerations

32. The building has a contemporary appearance and together with the proposed external materials, is acceptable in design terms. Given that the site has been previously identified for a new rugby club and in view of the extent of existing and proposed landscaping around the adjoining application site for 306 houses, and this site, the impact on the visual amenities of the area is also acceptable.

33. With regard to biodiversity considerations the land has been earmarked and approved for pitch provision under prevailing planning policy and under cover of the planning permission B/03/1504/FUL. As a consequence there is no objection to this proposal although the need to follow normal practices to protect wildlife must be adhered to. Conditions are recommended in accordance with the SWT's comments.

Highway considerations

34. No objection has been raised by the Local Highway Authority to the level of car parking provision on the site, the construction of the building or to the access arrangements. In view of this, and given the level of provision being made which is a significant improvement on former provision by the Club, there is no objection to the proposal in traffic generation or car parking terms.

Compensatory flood storage and drainage considerations

35. Given the levels of the new football pitches in relation to the approved compensatory flood storage provision of the 306 dwellings on the adjoining site, the position of the new Rugby Club building cannot be relocated elsewhere on the rugby club land without compromising flood storage requirements. To do so would be likely to attract an objection from the Environment Agency. It would also not meet the functional requirements of the Rugby Club, as the current siting is the optimum one in relation to their operation of the site (ie the ability to view action on the pitches from the building).
36. It is now informally understood from the Environment Agency that they have no objection to the current location, but they need to assess evidence of drainage issues so as to ensure the scheme meets surface water drainage requirements. Discussions are currently taking place with the Environment Agency and the agent to resolve this outstanding situation. Further information will be presented at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the satisfactory resolution of drainage issues and the provision of a footpath as required by the LHA with no objection from the Environment Agency or the LHA, the Chief Planning Control Officer be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions:-

- As recommended by the LHA
- As recommended by Environmental Health
- Materials
- No floodlighting except in accordance with details which shall first have been submitted to and approved by the LPA
- Levels
- Any as required by the EA
- As recommended by the SWT

DECISION