



Applicant:
Northamptonshire
County Council

Application No:
09/0156/FULWNN

Date Registered:
03.12.2009

Expiry Date: 04.03.2010

Ward: Parklands

Northampton UDA Planning Committee Paper

Report by Director of Planning and
Development

Date of Committee Meeting: 09/03/2010

Agenda Item: 6

Description: Installation of all-weather pitch with perimeter fencing. Eight No. 15 metre floodlighting columns. Alterations and remodelling of existing bunding to facilitate relocation of athletics track and sports pitches

Address: Thomas Beckett C Upper School, Becket Way,
Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN3 6HT

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the conditions set out in this report.

For the following reason:

The proposed application represents an important sporting facility for the students at Thomas Beckett School, which will also serve local the local community. This is considered to be consistent with the objectives of policy 42 of the East Midlands Regional Plan and WNDC's statutory purpose. The application has been considered against the provisions of all local development plan policies and is considered to be acceptable having regard to the planning objectives set out in policies E11, E20, E40, L1 and L2 of the Northampton Local Plan (1997).

2. Summary

- 2.1 This is a full planning application by the Northamptonshire County Council to provide an all-weather pitch which will be floodlit by eight no. 15 metre high lighting columns. It will be located immediately to the north of the existing tarmac games area to the rear of the school buildings.
- 2.2 As a result, the existing grass athletics track will need to be relocated and to facilitate this, alterations and remodelling of existing bunding on the site will be required. The track is proposed to be relocated adjacent to the south and west boundaries of the site. The remainder of the playing fields will be reconfigured to provide the other pitches
- 2.3 The all-weather pitch will be used primarily for football (and 5-a-side) but will also be used for hockey and occasionally netball, rounders and lacrosse. The design of the pitch is based on Football Association guidance for the layout and specification of the pitch.
- 2.4 In addition to the school, the existing grass pitches are used by 3 Gregory Celtic junior football teams for matches and training. They will continue to have access to the grass pitches. The new facility will increase community use of school facilities and the school are in discussions with 4 local junior football clubs who are very keen to use the facility once installed. The school anticipate that the level of community use will allow the appointment of a community/lettings officer to manage the facility.
- 2.5 It is worth noting that this application follows a previous application that was withdrawn. That application sought consent for a 5-a-side football facility through the development of 6 no. all-weather pitches (floodlit), an 11-a-side pitch (floodlit), 6 no. cricket practice nets, a pavilion/clubhouse building containing a bar, gymnasium and changing facilities. That application attracted a large amount of public interest and objection.
- 2.6 The proposals are considered to be acceptable, providing a use which will be available for use by the wider community. Subject to the conditions attached to the planning permission the proposal will not adversely affect the visual or residential amenity of the surrounding area and its residents.

3. Description of Proposal

3.1 This is a full planning application for the installation of all-weather pitch with perimeter fencing, eight No. 15 metre floodlighting columns and alterations and remodelling of the existing bunding to facilitate relocation of athletics track and sports pitches.

4. Description of Site

4.1 The application site is an existing Upper School located at the end of Becket Way. It comprises the main school building which is two storeys in height and located to the front of the site. Immediately to the rear of the main building is a tarmac games area. The remainder of the site comprises grass playing fields which are laid out to provide an athletics track, football pitches, a hockey pitch and all weather cricket strips. Their use varies depending on times of the year.

4.2 The site lies within the built up urban area of Northampton in the north west area of the town. It is bounded to the south, west and northern boundaries by existing residential properties and to the east by a mature strip of trees. To the other side of that boundary are allotments. The boundaries are characterised by existing fencing and mature planting to the north and, west and east. To the southern boundary is existing fencing with occasional planting.

4.3 The site is served by a single existing access from Becket Way. Upon entering the site, visitor parking and a bus loop is provided to the right and to the left is parking for the staff.

5. Policy Considerations

WNDC Purpose:

5.1 Under S136(1) of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, WNDC as an Urban Development Corporation has a statutory “objective” to deliver the regeneration of the area. The Secretary of State has determined that WNDC should have development control powers for certain types of development in order to carry out its objective.

National Planning Policy Guidance

5.2 The following Planning Policy Statements / Notes should be taken into consideration in the determination of this application.

PPS1 – Sustainable Development

PPS1 – Sustainable Development: Planning and Climate Change

PPG 17 – Planning and Open Space

6. Development Plan:

6.1 The Development Plan documents for the area comprise;

The East Midlands Regional Plan (RSS8) (2009);

The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-regional Spatial Strategy (MKSM) (2005);

The Northamptonshire County Structure Plan (NSP) (2001) (saved policies);

The Northampton Borough Local Plan (NLP) (1997) (saved policies).

6.2 East Midlands Regional Plan (RSS8) (2009) relevant policies;

Policy 1 (Regional Core Objectives);

Policy 2 (Promoting Better Design);

Policy 3 (Distribution of New development)

Policy 11 (Development in the Southern Sub Area)

Policy 18 (Regional Priorities for the Economy)

Policy 19 (Regional Priorities for Regeneration)

6.3 The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-regional Spatial Strategy (MKSM) (2005) relevant policies;

Policy 1 (Spatial Framework Locational Growth);

Policy 3 (Sustainable Communities);

Northamptonshire Policy 1 (The Spatial Framework);

Northamptonshire Policy 2 (Northampton Implementation Area).

6.4 The Northamptonshire County Structure Plan (NSP) (2001) (relevant saved policies);

SDA1 Strategic Development Areas

6.5 The Northampton Borough Local Plan (NLP) (1997) (relevant saved policies);

6.6 The site is designated within the Northampton Local Plan as an existing school site .

Policy E11 (Hedgerows and Trees)

Policy E20 (New development)

Policy E40 (Crime & Vandalism)

Policy L1 (Existing Recreational Facilities)

Policy L2 (Community Use of Existing Schools and Colleges)

7. Other non-statutory documents

7.1 WNDC Planning Principles (2009):

1. To deliver development and infrastructure that enables regeneration and growth in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.
2. To ensure that new development is supported by appropriate jobs, infrastructure and town centre regeneration.
3. To ensure that new development meets the Government's design quality and environmental standards and is integrated into existing communities.

7.2 WNDC Planning Obligation Strategy (POS):

The Planning Obligations Strategy sets out WNDC's approach to planning obligations, in particular, the arrangements for a 'Standard Charge' to be applied, initially, to new residential development within WNDC's area. The principal objective of the Strategy is to ensure that development contributes appropriately, both financially and/or in kind, towards the infrastructure needed across WNDC's area to deliver sustainable growth. Funding from planning obligations will be used, alongside other funding sources, to ensure that essential infrastructure, facilities and amenities are brought forward at the appropriate time, so that the growth and regeneration outcomes sought for the area can be achieved. The POS is currently subject to a review.

8. **Relevant Planning History**

- 8.1 08/0261/FULWNN – Development of 6 no. 5-a-side all weather football pitches with floodlighting, 1 no. 11-a-side all-weather football pitch with floodlighting, 6 no. cricket practice nets, erection of pavilion/clubhouse building containing bar, gymnasium and changing facilities, 20 no. cycle parking, associated works to access, car parking and landscaping. **Application withdrawn**

9. **Consultations**

- 9.1 **Northampton Borough Council:** Wish to see the following matters taken into account. The restriction of the hours of use of the pitches by condition to protect the amenities of adjoining properties, applicant to provide details to demonstrate that they have properly

assessed and will meet the recommended light levels set out in 'CIE Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations' and additional details provided by way of a tree survey to identify whether there would be an acceptable impact on nearby protected trees.

- 9.2 **Environmental Health:** main concern relates to proposed floodlighting and potential impact upon amenity. To avoid this, it is recommended that light levels should be below levels recommended in the 'CIE Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations: CIE 150:2003'. Therefore recommend a condition. Recommend condition regarding hours of use on weekdays and weekends.
- 9.3 **Arboricultural Officer:** applicant should submit a plan showing the location of proposed surfaces with trees plotted on and their corresponding BS 5837:2005 Root Protection Areas.
- 9.4 **NCC (Highways):** no comment received
- 9.5 **NCC (Rights Of Way):** no comment received
- 9.6 **Sport England:** Initial response raised a number of questions concerning the sports proposed for the facility, the type of all weather pitch proposed, whether FA guidance had been sought in the size and design, is there existing community use of the site, is community use proposed for the new facility and confirmation as to whether the cricket concrete pads and nets are to be replaced.
- 9.7 Second response received following submission of additional information by applicant in response to questions from Sport England. Sport England has considered the application in light of its playing fields policy, which aims to ensure that there is adequate supply of quality pitches to satisfy current and future demand for pitches in the area. The proposal will be built to FA guidance and the FA has confirmed their support in principle for the project. It is considered that the development will provide an alternative sports use, the provision of which will be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of part of the playing field. To secure community use an appropriate mechanism should be put in place and Sport England's standard condition is recommended.
- 9.8 The remodelled playing field should be provided in accordance with Sport England guidance. Provided the above requirements are met then the proposal is considered to accord with Exception Policy E5 of the Playing field Policy. If this is not secured, then objection is raised to the proposal and application should be referred to the Government Office should the Corporation be minded to grant consent.

10. Notifications and Responses

10.1 The application was advertised by press notice and site notices. 322 neighbouring properties were notified of the application by letter.

10.2 Five letters of comment or objection were received raising the following issues:

- More properties need to be consulted;
- Access/exit passes close to a number of houses in Kettering Road North and Becket Avenue;
- Concern regarding opening hours as application form not specific. Worry that facility will be used extensively outside school hours;
- Will the pitch be used commercially and hired out to non-pupils outside school hours;
- Wholly inappropriate due to insufficient parking, noise and light pollution; and
- Reasons to reject the first application are still valid.

10.3 15 letters of support/no objections making the following comments:

- As a member of Northampton Town Ladies we propose to use it;
- Important facility that will be a great asset to the school, the community and young people;
- Currently the only school in Northampton without an all-weather pitch and as a specialist sports college this is far from ideal;
- Will improve status of the school, developing the curriculum and academic standards;
- Will meet local demand including primary schools;
- School has worked with residents to ensure least possible impacts and representatives of Residents Action Group have no objections;
- Thorplands United support the proposal; and
- Overall benefit to youth football in Northamptonshire.

11. Evaluation

The following matters are relevant to the determination of this application:

Principle of development

Visual impact and landscaping

Neighbouring amenity

Highway matters

Other Matters

Principle of Development

- 11.1 In terms of considering the proposal the principle is assessed against a raft of national, regional and local planning policies. The Development Plan currently consists of the East Midlands Regional Plan (2009), the Northamptonshire Structure Plan and the Northampton Borough Local Plan 1997. In addition to the development plan it is appropriate to consider the proposal against Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 and Sport England's playing fields policy. The weight attached to Sport England's views on the application is considerable such that if the Corporation wished to approve the application contrary to their response, the application would have to be referred to the Government Office before granting planning permission.
- 11.2 First and foremost, the proposed development is to be sited on an existing school playing field, which weighs in its favour. However, the nature of the development is such that it will result in the loss of an area of playing field. PPG 17 and Sport England's playing field policy state that they will object to the loss of any area within playing fields to development unless one of five exceptions is met. They are as follows:
- E1 – A proven excess of provision;
 - E2 – The use is ancillary to the playing field;
 - E3 – The site is incapable of forming part of a pitch;
 - E4 – Equivalent or better replacement will be provided elsewhere;
 - E5 – An alternative sports use is proposed outweighing loss.
- 11.3 The proposed development will provide an alternative sports use on site which will outweigh the loss of part of the playing field. The applicants have confirmed in writing that existing community use of the site will continue on the remaining grass pitches and the new all-weather pitch will allow that use to be expanded. It is clear through some of the consultation responses that this has already been set in motion with local clubs expressing support for the facility and a desire to use the facility.
- 11.4 Local plan policy, PPG 17 and Sport England all support the proposal subject to the proposal being made available for use by the wider community. This will be secured by a planning condition which will require the applicant to submit details of a community use scheme for approval. The applicants have confirmed in writing that this is a given and such a scheme will be submitted for approval and will be implemented once the pitch is brought into use.

- 11.5 Turning to the alterations and remodelling of the existing bunding to facilitate the relocation of the athletics track, there is no issue of principle. This part of the playing fields is used as part of the outfield in association with cricket wickets in this part of the site.
- 11.6 In light of the above considerations the principle of development is acceptable. It will provide a facility that will be available for use by the wider community and in all likelihood maximise sporting use on site particularly in less favourable weather conditions.

Visual impact and landscaping

- 11.7 The all-weather pitch will be surrounded by perimeter fence measuring 3 metres around the majority of the pitch and 4.5 metres immediately behind the goals at either end of the pitch. The precise design and colour have not been submitted as part of the application. In addition, eight floodlighting columns are proposed measuring 15 metres in height.
- 11.8 The height of the fencing and floodlights proposed is consistent with a development of this nature. It is considered that whilst the individual lighting structures are significant in height, they will not have a significant impact upon the visual amenities of the area. The pitch is located to the rear of the existing school buildings and the school site itself is not visible from the wider area. Furthermore, this sort of facility and associated structures is the type of development that one would reasonably expect to see as part of a modern educational establishment. Some of the consultation responses have stated that Thomas Becket is the only school in Northampton not to have such a facility. The key visual issue associated with the all-weather pitch is the spread of light associated with the use of the floodlights. This will be discussed later in this report as part of the considerations of the impact upon the amenities of adjoining properties.
- 11.9 The alterations and remodelling works to the existing bunding will result in a change to the site levels near the southern boundary of the site but are not considered to have any visual impact upon the site or its surroundings. Overall, the proposed development is acceptable with regard to the impact upon visual amenities.

Neighbouring amenity

- 11.10 The application site is bounded by residential properties along both the south and west boundaries of the site. The potential impacts from the proposed development are light pollution from the proposed floodlights, loss of privacy from the remodelling of the existing playing field, increased use of the existing access and undue noise and disturbance due to use of the facility in the evening. Each issue is dealt with in turn.

Light Pollution

- 11.11 The all-weather pitch will be lit by 8 no. 15 metre high lighting columns. The closest that any of the lighting columns will be to adjoining residential properties is 65 metres. The application has been supported by two plans which show the light levels both within and outside the pitch and details of the proposed lighting units have also been provided.
- 11.12 Lighting columns are now predominantly designed so that the levels of light overspill, upward light and glare are reduced. The information submitted with the application demonstrates that this will be achieved based on a certain specification of lighting unit. The standard for assessing the lighting levels is the *CIE Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations: CIE 150:2003*. This designates different Environmental Zones and sets thresholds below which lighting levels should fall to be considered acceptable. For clarification, post curfew is between 23:00 and 06:00 unless otherwise specified.

Zone	Surrounding Lighting	Environment	Examples			
E1	Natural	Intrinsically dark	National parks or protected sites			
E2	Rural	Low district brightness	Industrial or residential rural areas			
E3	Suburban	Medium district brightness	Industrial or residential suburbs			
E4	Urban	High district brightness	Town centres and commercial areas			
Light Technical Parameter	Application Conditions	Environmental Zones				
		E1	E2	E3	E4	
Illuminance in vertical plane (Ev)	Pre-curfew:	2 Lux	5 Lux	10 Lux	25 Lux	
	Post-curfew:	0 Lux	1 Lux	2 Lux	5 Lux	
Light Technical Parameter	Application Conditions	Environmental Zones				
		E1	E2	E3	E4	
Luminous intensity emitted by luminaires (I)	Pre-curfew:	2500 cd	7500 cd	10000 cd	25000 cd	
	Post-curfew	0 cd	500 cd	1000 cd	2500 cd	

- 11.13 For the purposes of assessing this application it is considered that the site and surroundings fall to be considered within Environmental Zone E3. The lighting plans submitted do not show the lux levels at the nearest residential property but they do show that the lux levels will be 5 Lux at a distance of 30 metres from the edge of the pitch. At the edge of the pitch the lighting

level is as high as 345 Lux. It is therefore evident that the light intensity reduces dramatically outside the confines of the pitch and at a distance of 65 metres the lux levels will be zero. The proposed development will therefore accord with the standards as set out in the table above.

- 11.14 The Environmental Health Officer at Northampton Borough Council has raised no objections to the principle of development. However, to ensure that there is no deterioration in the amenity of neighbours due to glare and light trespass, it is recommended that the lighting levels be below those set out in the CIE Guidance. The information submitted with the application demonstrates this but it is considered both reasonable and necessary to attach a condition requiring strict compliance at all times.

Loss of Privacy

- 11.15 The remodelling and alterations to the existing bunding will result in a change to the topography of the site immediately to the rear of properties in Lorraine Crescent, located to the south of the application site. Presently, the embankment is 30 metres from the rear boundaries of those properties and rises up some 2 metres in that distance. On the school side of the embankment the land then falls away gradually before levelling out. The remodelling work will create an embankment that will rise up 2 metres in height over a distance of 11 metres. It will then fall away over a distance of 4 metres before levelling out. The resultant landform is therefore one of a 'man-made' bund rather than natural ground levels. The remodelling of the ground is required to allow the relocation of the athletics track, which at its closest point will be 20 metres from the rear boundaries of those properties in Lorraine Crescent.
- 11.16 The relocation of the athletics track does not in itself require planning permission as the current existing use of the land is as a playing field and as such can be configured to accommodate football pitches, athletics track or cricket pitches in any manner. However, the potential loss of amenity from the creation of the bund closer to residential properties is an important consideration. The potential impacts are from students overlooking those properties and any noise and disturbance.
- 11.17 It is considered that whilst the remodelling of the ground does create a bund closer to existing residential properties, there will not be any adverse impact upon privacy by reasons of overlooking. The bund has been developed to protect amenity by screening the athletics track both visually and in terms of reducing noise generated from the use of the track. It is considered appropriate that to further safeguard that amenity that some form of shrub planting is provided along the top of the bund to provide a soft barrier between the playing

field and the residential properties. The planting should be modest in height so as not to be overbearing in any way. Subject to this, the proposal is considered acceptable in this regard.

Increase Use of Existing Access

- 11.18 The existing sports facilities, with the exception of students, are used by 2 Gregory Celtic School Football Club junior teams who use the school gyms during the winter and the grass pitches for weekend matches and in the summer. There is occasional use by outside organisations during summer evenings and weekends. The applicants have stated that both Gregory Celtic and Parklands Junior Football Clubs have expressed a keen interest in using the new pitch. This has been evidenced by letters of support from those clubs and there have also been expressions of interest from other clubs.
- 11.19 Although only one pitch is proposed, it potentially can be sub-divided into three smaller pitches. A Travel Plan prepared in support of the application states that it is anticipated that a maximum of 24 people will use the all weather pitch in any 1 hour duration. In light of the existing use of school facilities by external organisations both at weekends and evenings, it is not considered that there will be a significant increase in the use of the school access such that it would adversely impact upon the amenities of adjoining residential properties.

Hours of Use

- 11.20 In view of the fact that the site is bounded by residential properties it is considered appropriate to attach a condition to the planning permission which restricts the hours of use of both the pitch and the floodlights. The application states that it is anticipated that 99% of matches, training sessions etc will be finished by 9pm and at the weekends the facility will be used between 10am and 4pm. It is considered appropriate to restrict the hours of use to 9.00pm during the week, 6pm on Saturday and 4pm on Sunday. To ensure that this is managed properly, details of a management regime will also be required by condition.

Highway matters

- 11.21 At the time of writing no comments have been received from Northamptonshire County Council's Highways office and officer's have requested any comments on several occasions. Notwithstanding this it is considered that there will not be any adverse impact upon highway safety. There will be a negligible increase in the use of the access during the day as the facility will be primarily used by the school. The level of use during evenings and weekends will potentially increase, but at a time when the school is not in use. Therefore highway safety will not be affected.

- 11.22 There is sufficient parking within the site to serve the development. Any visitors will visit the site outside of normal school hours when the majority of the car parking will not be in use. The proposed development is acceptable in this respect.

Other Matters

- 11.23 The consultation response from Northampton Borough Council recommends that the applicant be required to provide a tree survey to identify whether there would be an acceptable impact upon nearby protected trees. By way of reference, the previous application was accompanied by a Tree Survey for the site. The only trees on the site that could be assessed are along the east boundary of the site.

Conclusion

- 11.24 It is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable, providing a valuable facility to the school that will be available for use by the wider community. The proposals will not adversely affect the visual amenities of the area and there will also be no adverse impact upon the amenities of adjoining residential properties. Appropriate conditions are attached to the planning permission to ensure that any potential impacts are mitigated against. The application is therefore supported.

12. Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Prior to the commencement of construction of the all-weather pitch, a management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. It shall include details of access to the facility by non-school/non-members including hours available and parking arrangements, and details of how the hours of use of the pitch and the floodlights will be managed. The management plan shall be implemented at all times unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the facility is properly managed to the benefit of adjoining properties and available for use by the wider community in accordance with Policy L2.

3. The lighting hereby approved shall be designed and installed such that at all times the levels of illuminance and luminous intensity at any nearby sensitive premises shall not exceed the appropriate guide levels for Zone E3 as identified in the CIE Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations: CIE 150:2003 or subsequent guidance superseding that. The levels are 10Lux (Illuminance in the vertical plane) and 10000 cd (Luminous intensity emitted by Luminaries).

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties.

4. The all weather pitch hereby approved shall not be used between the hours of 2100 and 0830 Monday to Friday, 1800 and 0900 on Saturdays and 1600 and 1000 on Sundays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties.

5. The lighting columns hereby approved shall not be used between the hours of 2130 and 0830 Monday to Friday, 1800 and 0900 on Saturdays and 1600 and 1000 on Sundays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties.

6. Notwithstanding the information submitted, prior to the commencement of the development of the all-weather pitch details of the fencing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These shall include the colour, material for construction, the entrance gate and its locking mechanism. The details approved shall be implemented prior to the pitch being brought into use and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties and the visual amenity of the site and its surroundings.

7. Within one month of the date of the commencement of works to create the bund details of a planting scheme along the bund hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. The details shall include planting plans, including schedule of size, species, positions, density and times of planting;

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties and the visual amenity of

the site and its surroundings.

8. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the completion of the development, and which shall be maintained for a period of five years; such maintenance to include the replacement in the current or nearest planting season whichever is the sooner or shrubs that may die are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to secure a satisfactory standard of development.



Site Location Plan