

DELEGATED DECISION OFFICER REPORT

Proposed development: Proposed construction of artificial grass pitch with associated fencing and retrospective approval for 2 lane external cricket wickets / nets.

**Site address:
Edgworth Cricket & Recreation Club
Bolton Road
Turton
Bolton
BL7 0AP**

Applicant: Edgworth Cricket & Recreation Club

Application number: 10/20/0867

Case officer: Nick Blackledge - Senior Planner

Recommendation: APPROVE, subject to conditions.

The following report includes analysis of the merits of the application against the relevant policies of both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the adopted policies of the Blackburn With Darwen Borough's Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2 "Site Allocations and Development Management Policies", together with other relevant material planning considerations. The policies of the Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2 that have been used to assess this application are considered to be in accordance with the NPPF, and as such are material planning considerations.

The planning service, in assessing the planning application, has had due regard to the provisions of the Human Rights Act. It is an inherent part of the decision making process to assess the effects that a proposal will have on individuals, and weigh these against the wider public interest in determining whether development should be granted planning permission. In carrying out this balancing exercise, the planning service is satisfied that it has acted proportionately.

PROPOSAL

The application site essentially comprises to 2no. existing tennis courts, enclosed by mesh fencing at a height of about 3m, a grassed 5 a-side football pitch and 2no. cricket nets wicket, at Edgworth Cricket and Recreation Club. Approximately half of the site lies within the Edgworth Village Boundary. The remainder is within the Green Belt, as defined by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan Part 2 (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Map).

Access to the site is taken from the east of Bolton Road, which serves the Barlow Institute and Edgworth Cricket Club. The wider land holding includes the Institute

which accommodates a range of community uses, the clubhouse serving the cricket club and a range of sports facilities.

Planning permission is sought for a proposed artificial (3G) grass pitch with associated fencing and retention of two lane cricket wickets / nets, as set out in the submitted drawings.

Site Photos:

Publicity:

61 neighbours were consulted by letter and a site notice was displayed. One objection and one representation of support were received, summarised as follows:

Objection:

- Amenity impacts arising from opening hours, noise, flood lighting and traffic.

Support:

- Benefit of sports development for community and re-use of disused land.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Core Strategy (2011) Policies:

Local Plan Part 2 (2015) Policies:

Policy 3 The Green Belt
Policy 6 Village Boundaries
Policy 8 Development & People
Policy 10 Accessibility & Transport
Policy 11 Design

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

ASSESSMENT

The key issues in relation to this application are:

- Principle
- Amenity
- Environment
- Highways
- Design

Principle

Approximately half of the site is previously developed as tennis courts and is positioned within the village boundary. The remainder, towards the eastern boundary of the Club is within the green belt. Accordingly, green belt policy must be considered.

Policy 3 of the Development Plan is consistent with NPPF's aims and objectives of protecting land within the green belt, insofar as the construction of new buildings within the green belt is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful. One of the exceptions to this is the provision of facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or change of use) for outdoor sport and recreation, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the green belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. A football pitch and cricket wickets / nets in connection with the existing land use are consistent with this exception. Accordingly, the principle of the proposal is acceptable, subject to preservation of openness.

The application site (as defined by the red edged location plan) and wider land holding is defined by outdoor sports facilities, including the cricket club, tennis courts, children's play area and a bowling green, together with supporting buildings and the Barlow Institute. A 4.5m high perimeter fence will enclose the football pitch and cricket nets. The fence is an open mesh design powder coated in green, ensuring it integrates well with the surroundings. The position of the cricket clubhouse, The Institute and trees lining Bolton Road to the west and those to the east of the site will effectively screen much of the proposal from wider public views, limiting its visual prominence.

The Public Right of Way (PROW) to the immediate south of the site is the public vantage point from where the development would appear most visually prominent. Mature trees aligning it will, however, serve to mitigate its visual impact.

Six 10m high floodlighting columns will increase the sites visual prominence, particularly when in operation. Views of the columns from the public realm will be limited by the presence of mature trees offering effective screening as well as an assimilating backdrop. Moreover, as with the mesh fence, the columns will be powder coated in green to aid assimilation.

Considered in the overall context, the development is considered to appropriately preserve the openness of the Green Belt, nor would it conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Sport England offered an initial holding objection, citing insufficient information to assess whether the Artificial Grass Pitch meets their planning policy requirements, specifically policy exemption E5:

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

Following submission of additional information, Sport England withdrew their objection, acknowledging that the proposed pitch was compliant with the Policy E5, subject to a Community Use Agreement & Sports Development Plan being secured by condition.

Drainage of surface water from the pitch is agreed by Sport England.

Amenity

Policy 8 requires a satisfactory level of amenity and safety is secured for surrounding uses and for occupants or users of the development itself; with reference to noise, vibration, odour, light, dust, other pollution or nuisance, privacy / overlooking, and the relationship between buildings.

The Council's Public Protection consultee offers no objection in principle but does express some concern at the 10pm closure time proposed for the 3G pitch, suggesting that 9pm may be more appropriate, due to the proximity of residential properties. A 10pm closure is, however, considered acceptable, taking into account the public benefits of the scheme as well as its economic viability which may be threatened with an earlier closure time.

A lighting assessment has been submitted and reviewed. It is mutually agreed with the applicant that a condition will secure further information / mitigation to guard against intrusive light spill and glare into residential properties arising from flood lighting of the 3G pitch.

Compliance with Policy 8 is achieved.

Environment

Policy 9 requires that development will not have an unacceptable impact on environmental assets or interests, including but limited to climate change (including flood risk), green infrastructure, habitats, species, water quality and resources, trees and the efficient use of land.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been submitted and reviewed by the Council's specialist consultee, taking into account the mature tree belt adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. No objection is offered subject to protective measures being implemented during construction phase of the development. Such measures will be secured by condition.

No objection is offered by the Council's Drainage consultee. A surface water drainage scheme is submitted and agreed.

Compliance with Policy 9 is achieved.

Highways

Policy 10 requires that road safety and the safe and efficient and convenient movement of all highway users is not prejudiced and that appropriate provision is made for off street servicing and parking in accordance with the Council's adopted standards.

A Transport Statement (TS), and subsequent addendum thereto, has been submitted with the application and reviewed by the Council's Highways consultee. It takes account of access arrangements, impact on the highway network, dedicated off street parking and sustainable transport initiatives. It is acknowledged that current Covid restrictions prevent a survey of existing typical parking demand arising from the club and the Barlow Institute. Concern about the potential for overspill on-street parking arising from the proposal has been expressed by the Council's Highways consultee.

42 formalised standard parking bays, including 4 disabled are accommodated within the car park shared by the Club and the Barlow Institute. Motor cycle parking and covered cycle stands are also provided.

Access / egress arrangements are essentially pre-existing and are considered adequate to support the development.

Impact on the highway network is accepted as negligible.

The TS assess off street parking taking account of the collective uses reliant thereon, including the cricket club, bowling green and the Barlow Institute. It concludes an estimated increase in parking demand of a single vehicle during the day and approximately 7 vehicles after sunset during floodlit hours of operation. Floodlit use will not conflict with cricket activities or use of the bowling green. It is considered that a minor degree of conflict may arise between parking demand for the Institute and the pitch during the evening. Conflict between the pitch and clubhouse functions will be avoided as the Cricket Club will oversee booking arrangements for both.

The TS also acknowledges that the club and the institute are community facilities and are therefore very conscious of being good neighbours to the surrounding residents:

"The planning authority can be reassured the applicant will continue to monitor parking on-street and ensure the amenity of residents is not detrimentally affected".

A proposed Travel Plan (section 6 of the TS) will formalise monitoring of car parking and will present to the LPA an annual parking review, including displacement of parking off-site. Any measures required to protect the amenity of local residents will be discussed and agreed with the planning authority as part of the Travel Plan (TP) annual monitoring. The TP will be secured by condition.

Although not directly relevant to this application, the applicant has evidenced an imminent intention to apply for planning permission for the redevelopment of the children's play area into an additional 11 parking bays, as an extension of the existing provision.

On balance, compliance with Policy 10 is achieved.

Design / Character & Appearance / Heritage

Policy 11 requires a good standard of design and will be expected to enhance and reinforce the established character of the locality and demonstrate an understanding of the wider context towards making a positive contribution to the local area.

Policy 39 requires development with the potential to affect designated or non-designated heritage assets to sustain or enhance the significance of the asset. The proposal is supported by submission of a Heritage Statement.

The Barlow Institute is recognised a locally listed heritage asset. Although the relationship between the proposal and The Institute is such that a reasonable degree of separation is achieved.

The development is considered appropriate when considered against recreation / leisure context. Its position relative to existing buildings neighbouring and appropriately sympathetic boundary treatment ensures an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the Barlow Institute.

Compliance with Policy 11 is achieved.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of the Development Plan.

Nick Blackledge
18 February 2021