<u>Background Documents:</u> the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

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A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 11 September 2007.

Application by Kent County Council Children's Families & Education and Kent Education Partnership for the provision of a single, non-floodlit all weather pitch and a single non-floodlit multi-use games area in connection with the comprehensive redevelopment of the college site previously approved by application reference TM/04/3388, Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge – TM/07/1735

Recommendation: Subject to any further views received by the Committee Meeting recommend that the permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member: Mr G Horne MBE and Dr T Robinson

Classification: Unrestricted

The Site

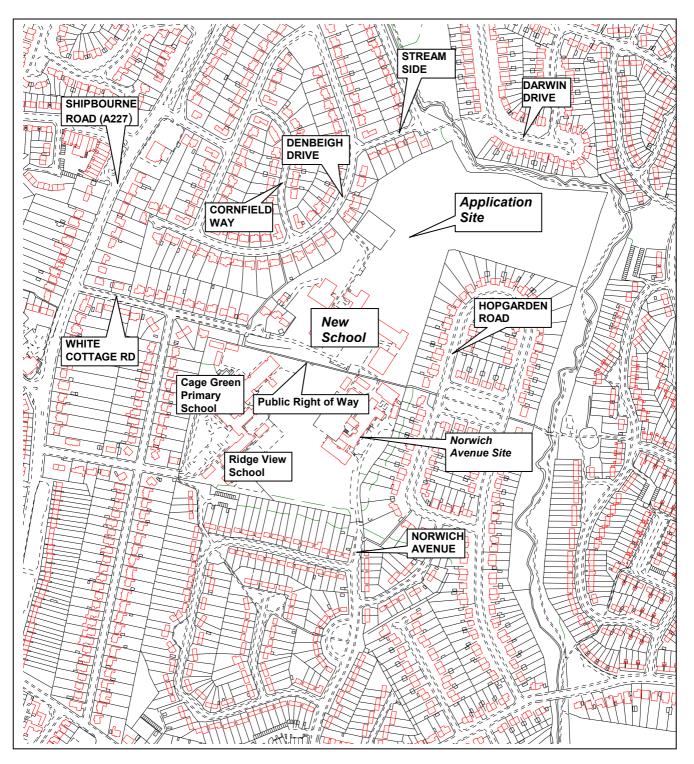
1. The application site is part of the playing field on the northern part of the Hugh Christie Technology College site, which is to the east of the A227 Shipbourne Road, Tonbridge. To the south of the playing field a new replacement school building and associated car parking with vehicular access from White Cottage Road, granted permission in December 2004, is currently being constructed. Once completed the school will relocate entirely onto the northern part of the site with the intention that the southern (Norwich Avenue) part of the site is developed for housing. The area of the playing fields affected by the proposal adjoins residential properties to the west, north and in part to the east, and tennis courts to the south. The playing field is identified in the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan as an area of Important Green Space, but the college site is otherwise within the urban area confines. A site location plan is attached.

Members' Site Meeting

2. A group of Planning Application Committee Members visited the application site and met with local residents on the 22 January 2007 to acquaint themselves with the proposals and the issues arising in respect of a previous planning application (reference TM/06/3796), which was subsequently withdrawn. That application was for provision of a single, floodlit all weather pitch and a single non-floodlit multi-use games area, and included community use. The Committee Secretary's notes of that meeting are attached as an Appendix, although they do relate to the earlier withdrawn application.

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Site Location Plan



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All weather pitch and multi-use games area, Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge - TM/07/1735

EXISTING LAYOUT





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All weather pitch and multi-use games area, Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge - TM/07/1735



All weather pitch and multi-use games area, Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge - TM/07/1735

Background and Proposal

- 3. The proposal is for an all weather pitch (approx. 43 metres x 68 metres) and a multi-use games area (approx. 33 metres x 26 metres) to replace an existing multi-use games area which would be lost. The current application seeks to address the objections raised by the earlier proposal in that it does not include flood lighting, the multi-use games area has been reduced in size, and community use is no longer included. *Reduced drawings are attached showing the existing and proposed playing field layouts.*
- 4. It is proposed that the all weather pitch would be used for school standard of play, 50% of the time for hockey, 40% football and 10% other sport. The applicants advise that approximately 30 people would use the all weather pitch at any one time and that there would be no increase in the numbers of pupils using the playing fields, all weather pitch and multi-use games area over existing numbers. The proposed core hours of use of the all weather pitch are 08:30 to 18:00 Monday to Friday. On some occasions however, as is currently the case with the school playing field, the all weather pitch may be also used for one-off events on Saturday mornings.
- 5. The all weather pitch would be an artificial turf surface at a level of 30.5 metres at the southern end and 29.5 metres at the northern end with cross-falls to allow for drainage. Variations in level with existing ground level would be treated by way of grassed banking. It would be drained by a perimeter drain to the outside of the surfaced area with an out fall pipe to a new attenuation tank located below the proposed multi-use games area with subsequent discharge into main drains. The multi-use games area would be at a level of 28 metres with drainage also to the new attenuation tank. The all weather pitch would be enclosed by a 3.0 metre high, weld mesh fence raised to 4.5 metres high for a distance of 30 metres behind the goals. The multi-use games area would be enclosed by a 2.75 metre high fence. Access to the proposed AWP and adjacent MUGA would be provided by an approximately 3.5m wide pathway connecting the entrances to each area to the remainder of the school site. New planting is proposed between the all weather pitch and multi-use games area and the site boundary to the west.
- 6. The proposal also involves the erection of a small tractor shed and the repositioning of the existing long jump pits along the eastern boundary of the playing field parallel with the all weather pitch.
- 7. The College has provided the following information in support of the application:

"Use and management of the all weather pitch and multi-use games area at Hugh Christie

The development of an all weather pitch at Hugh Christie is in line with the Government's drive to improve the health of the young in this country. The Government is now requiring all students to complete at least 2 hours of Physical Activity each week as part of the Every Child Matters agenda.

The all weather pitch is very important to the College in its drive to improve the participation of all students in physical activity of some kind. The all weather pitch is designed to be capable of being used for a great many sports, however the majority of the time the all weather pitch will be used for 2 main sports, hockey and football. Currently the condition of the field makes it very difficult, and at times dangerous, for

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hockey to be played for a considerable part of the winter. This winter, for example, the pitch has been out of use for hockey from October, as a result a great deal of curriculum time has been lost and staff have been forced to compromise on the activities that are offered to students. When hockey is not being played on the all weather pitch, it will, at times, be used for football and general practices particularly when the grassed areas become too wet.

The AWP cannot be sited anywhere else on the College grounds due to the buildings, tennis courts and associated roads and car parking areas. As part of the development of the College, KCC and the Governors have decided that the security risk that the footpath poses is too high a risk and therefore the decision was taken to establish the new school entirely on one side of the footpath; as a result the Norwich Avenue site will be disposed of once full occupation of the new buildings has occurred.

The remainder of the grassed areas of the field will continue to be used for football, rugby, training (on the training grids) and in the summer for cricket, rounders, athletics and softball.

The field at present is only used for activities under the supervision of Physical Education staff and there are no plans to make changes in the way in which the field is used (including the all weather pitch and mult-use games area).

Security has been a particular concern to the College over the past 3 to 4 years and now that the building contractor has replaced the fencing to Woodlands Walk we are not experiencing the levels of problems on the field during evenings and weekends that we have experienced in the past. We will, of course, monitor this situation on a regular basis.

The periods of time that the all weather pitch, multi-use games area and field may be used are the same as the times that the field is currently used. Lessons begin at 08.30 and finish at 15.10 followed by after school clubs and fixtures. The majority of clubs last approximately one and a half hours. Sporting fixtures with other local schools remain a very important part of the college activities and these would continue to take place, some events in the summer may last longer (cricket for example) and may continue until 6pm – 6.30pm although this is rare. There may also be rare occasions when school fixtures have to be played on a Saturday morning, although this is very unusual. It is likely that at times schools such as Cage Green, Woodlands and others may use the facilities, again this is a continuation of the practice of previous years and would only occur during the normal day (8.30 to 6pm).

The College has for some years offered summer schools for some of the students joining us in September. These summer schools take place in the holidays and would involve some use of the field/ all weather pitch for a limited period of 1 to 2 weeks during the summer holidays. The timings of the activities in connection with the summer schools would be during normal school hours."

Planning Policy

- 8. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the submission:
 - (1) The adopted 2006 Kent & Medway Structure Plan:
 - Policy QL1 Requires that all development should be well designed and be of high quality. Developments, individually or taken together, should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings. Development which would be detrimental to the built environment, amenity, functioning and character of settlements or the countryside will not be permitted.
 - Policy QL11 Existing community services *(including schools and other education provision)* and recreation facilities will be protected as long as there is a demonstrable need for them. Provision will be made for the development and improvement of local services in existing residential areas and in town and district centres, particularly where services are deficient. Flexibility in the use of buildings for mixed community uses, and the concentration of sports facilities at schools, will be encouraged.
 - Policy NR5 The quality of Kent's environment will be conserved and enhanced. This will include the visual, ecological, geological, historic and water environments, air quality, noise and levels of tranquillity and light intrusion. Development which would result in, or significantly contribute to, unacceptable levels of pollution, will not be permitted.
 - (ii) The adopted 1998 Tonbridge and Malling Borough Local Plan:
 - Policy P4/10 States that permission will not be given for any development within or adjoining Important Green Spaces, unless the need for the development is overriding and the proposals would not adversely affect the contribution which the spaces make to the character and quality of townscape. Where development may exceptionally be justified which results in the loss of part of an Important Green Space, the Borough will, where practicable, require enhancements to the retained area to compensate for the loss.

Consultations

- 9. **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council** raises no objection subject to the following conditions:
 - (1) No floodlighting, whether permanent or temporary, shall be erected or installed for use in association with the playing pitches without the prior approval of the local planning authority. *Reason: The protection of the locality and adjacent residential properties from light pollution.*

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- (2) The extent of use of the all weather pitch and multi-use games area during the summer school holidays (i.e. the number of days use) shall be limited to that set out in the supporting Statement submitted with the planning application. Any alteration of use or times shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. *Reason: To protect the amenities of adjacent residential properties.*
- (3) The all weather pitch and multi-use games area shall not be used outside the hours of 08.30 to 19.00 Mondays to Saturdays, with no use at all on Sundays and Bank or Public Holidays. Reason: In the interests of protecting the amenities of surrounding residential properties.
- (4) A condition to cover the requirements of the Environment Agency.

Sport England has made the following comments:

The Playing Fields Policy states that Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field unless, in the judgement of Sport England, one of five specific circumstances applies.

The revised application includes no floodlighting and no community use of the allweather pitch and multi-use games area. Sport England is greatly concerned that community use has now been removed from the proposals. Sport facilities provided at school sites are an important resource, not just for the school through the delivery of the national curriculum and extra-curricular sport, but also for the wider community. There are also direct benefits to young people, particularly in strengthening the links between their involvement in sport during school time and continued participation in their own time.

The technology now exists to mitigate against noise from synthetic turf pitches. Also advancements in floodlighting ensure lighting glare is not transmitted from the pitch to any significant distance. Sport England hopes that opportunities for community use of the proposed facilities will be investigated at a later date to enable greater opportunities for sports participation in the local community and is willing to work with the applicants for these objectives.

A significant proportion of the playing field will be developed as a result of the proposals. However improved use of the existing playing fields will be made and two football pitches, training grids, running track and cricket square can be provided. The all-weather pitch and multi-use games area will bring a significant improvement to the school sports facilities particularly for hockey. Given the area of playing field that would remain and the sporting benefits for the school Sport England is satisfied the proposed development meets Exception E5 to their Playing Fields Policy.

Consequently, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to the proposed development. Due to lack of community use, Sport England is unable to offer support to this planning application.

The Environment Agency has no objection to the proposal, but would like to offer the following advice. The surface water drainage details state that the runoff from the proposed development area will be directed towards an attenuation tank prior to discharge to the main drainage system. The relevant utility company should be contacted to ensure the system has sufficient capacity to accommodate the attenuated flows. There should therefore be no direct discharge to the watercourse in the vicinity as flows are directed to the mains drainage system.

Environmental (Noise) Consultant has commented as follows:

"The proposed all weather pitch and MUGA are to be sited on the position of an existing sports pitch. It is to be used only between 0830hours and 1800hours during the week. There is to be no regular weekend or other community use of the pitches. The Applicant has submitted a Noise Assessment Report and although I disagree with its methodology (BS 4142 is for assessing industrial noise), I agree with the summary that no additional noise is to be introduced to the existing noise environment. There should therefore be no detriment to amenity to the nearest noise sensitive receivers."

The Divisional Transportation Manager raises no highway objections.

County Landscape Adviser in principle has no objection to the species, sizes or planting densities to be used on site, but would like the applicant to review the northern corner of the site and views from neighbouring properties. Suggests that consideration could be given to the use of a hedge or native shrub planting area positioned around the outside of the multi-use games area to help soften the views of the facility.

Local Member

10. The local County Members, Mr G Horne MBE and Dr T Robinson were notified of the application on the 8 May 2007.

Publicity

11. The application was publicised by an advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of 3 site notices and the individual notification of 130 residential properties, which included. those notified of the previous proposal and/or who made representations at that time.

Representations

- 12. I have received letters of representation from residents of a total of 11 properties, including from White Cottage Road, Denbeigh Drive, Stream Side, Cornfield Way and Hopgarden Road. A summary of the issues raised/points made is set out below.
 - The revised application does seem to address concerns raised to the earlier application and as such she would not have any objection. However asks if a proviso could be added to any permission to prevent the school seeking to use it for community use and extend the hours at some time in the future. Hopes that Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council consider the application before KCC determine the application.
 - Happier about the new planning application but still worried that they could get approval for public use and floodlighting at a later date. Asks whether it would be possible to include a clause to say that they cannot apply for this at a later stage.
 - Asks for assurance that clauses will also be included that the school playing fields will only be used for pupils in school hours or on the occasional Saturday morning.
 - The proposed pitches are too close to adjoining properties and would have an unacceptable impact on them and the environment.
 - Concerned about the levels being raised above the existing site levels and the consequence for being overlooked and the unacceptable visual impact of the fencing.

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- The maximum height of the fence behind the goals is too high. 3.6 metres would be sufficient.
- Drainage of the entire field by the use of an attenuation tank would solve the need for and high cost of the all weather pitch.
- Questions that there would be no increase in the numbers of pupils using the playing fields and that there would not be an increase in the noise generated by use of the all weather pitch over current use of this part of the playing field.
- There are already adequate pitches on the site.
- Enough of the site is already covered in concrete without taking any more of the grassed area. The footprint of the proposed development is almost the same as the new school buildings and destroys almost a third of the existing area of grassed playing field.
- Questions whether with global warming the ground water on the site should be drained away.
- The all weather pitch and multi-use games area are far too close to residential properties and would be very intrusive particularly with the fencing. If the levels are raised there would also be the possibility of overlooking and loss of privacy.
- Considers the proposal would be contrary to the playing field designation as an 'Important Green Space.'
- The playing fields are at present used as a feeding ground for bats and reducing the grassed area may affect their ability to find food.
- Concerned at an increased flood risk to the area bearing in mind that part of the playing field to the north and adjoining areas are designated by the Environment Agency as land liable to flood.
- Suggests that other facilities in the locality be used, including the Longmead Stadium.
- Considers that the site is not suitable for a development like this and that the quality of life for residents would be severely diminished.
- Concerned about security and the possibility of unauthorised use out of school hours.

Discussion

- 13. Members will recall that there were significant objections to the previous proposal mainly, but not exclusively, because of the impact of floodlighting and community use. In order to address these concerns, floodlighting and community use have been removed from the revised application. The size of the multi-use games area has also been reduced so that it is a similar distance away from residential properties as the all weather pitch. However a number of concerns about the proposal remain as set out in paragraph (12) above. The main issues are considered below.
- 14. It will be noted that the school playing field of which the application site is a part is identified in the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan as an area of Important Green Space. The Local Plan Policy P4/10 seeks to protect such areas from development, unless the need for it is overriding and the proposals would not adversely affect the contribution that the space makes to the character and quality of townscape. In one way the use of the playing fields would not change as a result of the development, in that the land would still be used for sport and recreation. However whilst construction of the surfaces would change the character of the open space to a more limited extent, the addition of fencing would add to the visual presence of the proposed development and would to some extent change views across the site from adjoining residential properties. On the other hand the visual impact could be mitigated by the fencing being finished in black

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and, as proposed, provision of some new planting to filter views of the development. That would be particularly important where the existing boundary is more open. In this respect the landscaping details should be reviewed to include the planting around the outside of the multi-use games area suggested by our landscape adviser. These matters could be covered by appropriate conditions.

- 15. The College has identified a need for improved sports facilities, in particular to meet curriculum needs during the winter months, which I consider would also meet the objective of Structure Plan Policy QL 11 for provision of community facilities, including those for schools and sport. Bearing this in mind and measures to mitigate the visual impact, I do not consider that an objection on the basis of Local Plan Policy P4/10 would be warranted. Nor do I consider that enhancements (as referred to in the policy) to the remaining playing field area are necessary, in addition to the area of landscaping already proposed. Even with the proposed all weather pitch and multi-games area located within it, the playing field as a whole would continue to make a significant contribution to the character and quality of townscape of the area as well as in its formal use for sport and recreation.
- 16. There are some concerns about the level of the new surfaces being raised above existing ground levels with a consequence for increasing the overall height of the fencing and potential for overlooking and loss of privacy. Details of existing and proposed levels have been provided. The all weather pitch is proposed to be 30.5 metres at the southern end and 29.5 metres at the northern end, to achieve a balance of cut and fill. These levels would result in the pitch being approximately 0.75 to 1 metre higher than existing levels at the northern end and an average of about 1.7 metres lower at the southern end. The multi-use games area is proposed to be at 28 metres. Although this is a metre and a half below the level of the adjoining all weather pitch, it compares with existing levels that vary from about 28.75 metres along the southern end to 27.75 metres along the north end. Overall, I consider that proposed levels for the all weather pitch and multi-use games area are reasonable but if permission is granted a condition should be imposed requiring that they be constructed in accordance with and no higher than the submitted details.
- 17. Details of how surface water would be dealt with have been provided (outlined in paragraph (5) above) as this has also been of concern to some residents, with the possibility of run-off onto their properties. It will be noted that the Environment Agency has not raised objection subject to the relevant utility company being satisfied that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the attenuated flows. Also that there should be no direct discharge to the watercourse in the vicinity as flows are directed to the mains drainage system. I understand from the applicant that the design of the drainage system has been approved by Southern Water.
- 18. I am mindful that Structure Plan Policy QL1 amongst other things seeks to protect the amenity of settlements, and as such, development should not adversely affect the ability of neighbours to enjoy reasonable levels of privacy, peace and quiet. However now that the community use element of the proposal has been removed the hours of use are intended to be no different than at present. The applicants have indicated there is already a playing pitch located in the general area of the application site and the existing multi-use games area is much closer to the boundary than either the proposed all weather pitch or multi-use games area. It will be noted that they are located approximately midway between the boundary to the west and east, and at least 20 metres from the boundaries with adjoining residential properties. Our environmental consultant agrees with the summary in the noise report submitted with the application

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that no additional noise is to be introduced to the existing noise environment and considers that there should be no detriment to amenity to the nearest noise sensitive receivers. In the light of the above considerations, I would not raise objection to the proposal on the grounds of loss of residential amenity.

19. Despite the removal of community use and floodlighting, concern has been raised that the applicant may apply for these subsequently, once the all weather pitch and multiuse games area have been constructed. Whilst it is not possible to preclude this from happening, any application(s) would be considered and determined on its merits. It would however be appropriate to impose a condition that no floodlighting shall be installed without the permission of the County Planning Authority to ensure for that no portable or temporary floodlighting that might not require planning permission could be installed without permission. In terms of hours of use and community use, I consider that without the floodlights this would on the whole be self-governing. However the Borough Council has requested conditions be imposed in these respects, as set in paragraph 9 (above), with which I understand the applicant is content.

Conclusion

20. The proposal seeks permission to provide improved sports facilities to meet curriculum needs. Bearing in mind that community use and floodlighting are no longer proposed, the multi-use games area has been reduced in size, the established playing field/sport use, and the mitigation measures, as discussed above, on balance I consider that the proposal would accord with the general aims and objectives of the Development Planning Policies. Therefore subject to any further views received by the Committee Meeting, I recommend that permission be granted subject to conditions.

Recommendation

- 21. SUBJECT TO any further views received by the Committee Meeting, I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT To conditions covering:
 - the standard time limit,
 - the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details,
 - submission for approval of the details of the tractor shed,
 - the extent of use of the all weather pitch and multi-use games area during the summer school holidays (i.e. the number of days use) limited to that set out in the Supporting Statement submitted with the planning application,
 - the use of the all weather pitch and multi-use games area being restricted to the hours of 08.30 to 19.00 hours Mondays to Saturdays, with no use at all on Sundays and Bank or Public Holidays,
 - the fencing to be finished in matt black,
 - submission for approval of final landscape details, to include planting around the outside of the multi-use games area, subsequent implementation and maintenance of the landscaping proposals,
 - levels of the all weather pitch and multi-use games area to accord with the submitted details,
 - drainage to be implemented in accordance with the submitted details, and
 - no flood lighting shall be erected on the all weather pitch or the multi-use games area without the prior written permission of the County Planning Authority.

Case officer - Paul Hopkins	01622 221051	

Background documents - See section heading