

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at The Community College, Whitstable – CA/07/705

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 July 2007.

Application by Kent County Council Children Families and Education and the Governors of The Community College Whitstable for a proposed new all weather sports pitch with floodlighting at The Community College Whitstable, Bellevue Road, Whitstable - (Ref: CA/07/705)

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr M. Dance & Mr M. Harrison

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The Community College, Whitstable is located approximately 1 km to the south of the centre of Whitstable, just north of the A2990 (the former Thanet Way). The College campus comprises four parcels of land – the main campus site, Plot 10 (a wildlife area also used for field athletics events), Invicta Field (unused site) and Church Street Playing Fields (used for various sports, and athletics). The proposed all weather sports pitch would be located within the main campus site, which fronts Bellevue Road and contains all the teaching and administration accommodation, together with a joint College and community indoor sports centre, owned and managed by Canterbury City Council. All built accommodation lies to the south of the site, with three fenced outdoor games courts and approximately 2 hectares of open playing field, accommodating a football and cricket pitch, located to the north. The site is bounded by residential properties, apart from the college frontage. Between the College boundary and the residential properties on the north west, north east and south east lie Bellevue Road, Invicta Road and Clifford Road, which are unmade roads. The proposed all weather sports pitch would be located adjacent to the north eastern boundary of the site, in close proximity to the existing sports centre. *A site plan is attached.*

Background

2. This application replicates a previous application (CA/03/985) which was granted planning permission in January 2004. Members visited the site on the 4 December 2003, and Members resolved to grant planning permission at the Planning Applications Committee Meeting on the 20 January 2004. Condition (1) of the planning consent required the development to commence not later than 3 years from the date of the permission. As no works have begun on site, the planning permission expired on the 21 January 2007. Although this application replicates the previous proposal, this is a new application and therefore needs to be considered and determined on its own merits.
3. Whitstable Community College is one of the secondary schools in Kent included in the first tranche of the Building Schools for the Future programme. Whilst that programme envisages substantial rebuilding of the College accommodation on the site, the existing sports facilities are not directly affected. Therefore, this application would have no direct bearing on the Building Schools for the Future proposal, and vice versa.

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Proposal

4. This proposal involves the installation of an all-weather sports pitch on the main campus site of The Community College, on an area currently used as playing field. The pitch would be located adjacent to the existing sports hall to enable use of the existing changing facilities. In order to prevent mud being deposited on the synthetic surface a 1.2 metre wide macadam path is proposed to the perimeter of the pitch, which would extend to the existing hard surfacing adjacent to the sports hall. The fence around the perimeter of the pitch as approved under the previous application was 2.75m chain link fencing, with wooden boarding to the base. The applicant is now proposing a 3m high weldmesh fence, to be powder coated green. For the 0.9m section at the base of the fencing the bars would be stronger, negating the need for wooden boarding. The fencing would be recessed behind the main soccer goals and along the sides of the main pitch to accommodate five-a-side goals.
5. The applicant advises that the synthetic turf pitch must be of a definitive size in order to permit games, adequate marking out and run off. The sports pitch is, therefore, proposed to be 101.44m long by 62.85m wide. The works would require the re-grading of an area outside the main sports hall, which would involve an element of cut and fill. In addition, consolidation of the sub-structure would be achieved by the importation of sub-base material, on which the all weather pitch would be laid. Drainage of this area would be set out underneath and along the edges of the sports pitch, and would be connected to the existing drainage on Downs Avenue.
6. The artificial pitch would primarily be used for College based sports activities, but it is intended that the facility be geared to recreational/club level sports for local teams. The proposed hours of use are 09.00 to 21.30 Mondays to Saturdays, and from 10.00 to 21.00 on Sunday. Use by the College would cease at 17.30, from which time the pitch would be available for local clubs, etc. In addition, one day during the week may be set aside for use by other primary schools in the area. The applicant states that additional parking could be provided adjacent to the Whitstable Sports Centre, close to the location of the floodlit pitch, to cater for any additional traffic generated from the proposal. That is likely to be predominately private cars, as a result of private hire of the facility, or a number of public service vehicles, coaches, or other school minivans when tournaments are staged. The College is also in the process of preparing a Travel Plan.
7. The lighting of the all weather pitch is an important element of the proposal in that it would extend the hours of use of the all weather surface during the winter months. An illumination level of 300 lux is required to enable sports with high lighting level requirements, such as hockey and tennis, to be played at club level. In order to provide an illumination level of 300 lux, eight 15 metre high lighting columns would be installed, four columns for each side of the pitch. The floodlights would be turned off within 15 minutes of the end of the last match played.
8. Philips Lighting prepared a Lighting Proposal for the previous application, which has been resubmitted. It is stated within the Lighting Proposal that the Philips 'OptiVision' floodlight generates 3 times less spill light than asymmetric floodlights, and 10 times less than conventional symmetrical reflector floodlights. The asymmetric distribution of the Philips 'Optivision' also allows for a lower tilt angle from the horizontal, hiding the lamp, reducing glare. For this proposal all floodlights have been tilted as flat as possible, the maximum tilt angle being 7° above the horizontal floodplain. Due to the spill and glare control of the floodlights proposed, it is not envisaged that the use of louvres or cowl attachments would be required.

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9. The Lighting Proposal was prepared on the basis of an ordinance map and accompanying planning application information provided by the applicant, which indicates that the pitch would be located within an 'urban location'. According to the Institution of Lighting Engineers Guidance, the site would therefore be categorised as an E3 environmental area – 'small town centre or urban location'.
10. The pitch is proposed to be set at an angle to create a triangle of land where tree and shrub planting could be introduced. Quick growing evergreen trees, such as Holm Oaks, could be planted, which would grow to some considerable height, and provide a year round screen. The applicant proposes to submit a detailed landscaping scheme should planning permission be granted.

Reduced copies of the submitted drawings showing the site layout, and proposed floodlighting, are attached.

Planning Policy

11. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:

(i) **The Kent & Medway Structure Plan: Adopted 2006:**

Policy SP1 - Seeks to conserve and enhance Kent's environment and ensure a sustainable pattern of development.

Policy QL1 – All development should be well designed and be of high quality. Developments should respond positively to the scale, layout, pattern and character of their local surroundings.

Policy QL12- Community Services, including schools and education provision, will be provided as long as there is a demonstrable need for them.

Policy QL15 – Local Development Documents will make provision for sport, informal and formal recreation facilities, taking account of the potential for dual use and/or joint provision. All major new formal recreation and sports facilities should be designed to avoid nuisance from traffic, noise and lighting.

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.

(ii) The adopted (2006) **Canterbury District Local Plan:**

Policy BE1 - The City Council will expect proposals of high quality design which respond to the objectives of sustainable development.

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Policy BE3 - Design statements and/or Development Briefs shall be submitted with planning applications setting out the principles used in the scheme to relate the development within and to its context. This will apply to all planning applications, where the development is visually significant or is significant to its neighbours.

Policy C17 - The City Council will work with the Education Authority and school Governors to ensure that the needs of primary and secondary schools are taken into account in the assessment of their development needs and proposals. Planning permission will be granted for proposals that are needed by the schools subject to design and highway safety considerations.

Policy C40 - When granting planning permission for development which could potentially result in pollution, the City Council will impose conditions or seek agreements to ensure subsequent mitigation measures are undertaken.

Consultations

12. Canterbury City Council: comments as follows:

“I can confirm that Canterbury City Council has no objection to the principle of the application. The site is existing playing fields for the Community College and money has been generated from the sale of the nearby Invicta Fields to provide for all weather sports pitches.

Kent County Council should be satisfied that sufficient landscaping screening is provided on the boundary of the site to provide screening for properties in surrounding roads. Turning to the floodlighting specifically, Kent County Council should control the number of, and hours the floodlighting is proposed to be used, to ensure this is not excessive and resulting in unacceptable nuisance to the residential neighbours. Canterbury City Council also considers that an assessment of the floodlighting should be undertaken to ensure no outspill of light to the adjacent residential properties.”

In addition **Canterbury City Council’s Environmental Health Officer** has commented as follows:

“I have no objection to the proposal in principle. However, I have some concerns over residential amenity being affected by overspill from the floodlighting, and also noise from people shouting during the night-time use of the pitch.

I disagree with the applicants view that the night-time light levels in this locality are relatively high, and while overspill beyond the pitch area can be controlled by using asymmetric luminaires, the sky glow from the installation will still provide a level of illumination on the facades of neighbouring houses.

I would therefore recommend that the vertical illuminance at the facades of the nearest residential properties should not exceed the pre-existing light time levels by more than 1 Lux when the floodlights are in use.”

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“The applicants do not appear to have considered the impact of noise from people using the new pitch. Shouting, cheering and swearing is a normal occurrence during most competitive team games, and I would request that the applicants demonstrate how they are going to control the impact of noise on neighbouring residents.”

Divisional Transport Manager: raises no objection to the proposed development, subject to all parking, including overspill, being made available whenever the sports pitch is in use, and inclusion of the sports pitch, and its impacts, within the Community College’s Travel Plan.

The County Council’s Noise Consultant: expressed concerns regarding the potential introduction of noise during the evenings, where currently there is none, due to the introduction of the all-weather pitch with floodlighting. As Invicta Road is an unmade road, traffic noise levels will currently be low. Therefore, it is suggested that an acoustic fence and/or bund be erected, which should ensure that noise does not affect the amenity of the closest properties in Invicta Road. Details of this could be required under planning condition.

The County Council’s Lighting Consultant: comments as follows:

“This application appears to be no different from the earlier application in 2003 as far as the proposed floodlighting is concerned. Therefore, as stated in my earlier response on 10th December 2003, the amount of light falling in adjacent properties is within the limits set in the Institution for Lighting Engineers (ILE) Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light Pollution and therefore complies with this document.”

Following receipt of neighbour representations (summarised in paragraph 13), further comments were obtained from the County Lighting Consultant. These comments are summarised at the end of paragraph 13.

The County Council’s Landscaping Consultant: no comments received to date.

Sport England: raises no objection to the proposed development, and would wish to see a Community Use Agreement drawn up and undertaken.

The Environment Agency: raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions regarding drainage and land contamination.

The County Archaeologist: requests that a condition be placed on any grant of planning permission requiring the securing of the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a written specification and timetable.

Local Member

13. The local County Members, Mr M. Dance and Mr M. Harrison, were notified of the application on the 18 May 2007.

Publicity and Representations

14. The application was publicised by advertisement in a local newspaper, the posting of a site notice, and individual neighbour notification letters to 40 local residents. 4 letters of

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representation have been received to date, and the points of concern and objection are summarised below:

- This application is obviously a ‘rehash’ of CA/03/985, which a number of local residents objected to previously;
- The height and amount of lighting proposed is a cause of concern. Local residents already suffer from light pollution from existing College buildings;
- The lighting columns appear excessively high;
- The application will lead to noise and light pollution;
- Bellevue Road is at best an unadopted road, but is more accurately described as a Private Street with Public Footpath (Whitstable UDC 1977);
- Due to the College, Bellevue Road is solidly parked all day and almost impassable during peak school hours;
- The proposal would lead to increased traffic and congestion;
- The floodlit pitch is not necessary for the pupils at the College;
- The current drainage system cannot cope with existing development;
- Concern is expressed over construction access, and it is requested that Clifford Road is not used;
- There is a widespread problem with litter associated with pupils of the College;

An objection was received from a neighbouring resident who represented himself, and 44 local properties, the addresses of which were listed. The local residents had commissioned a review of this proposal by Mr Pollard, past President of the Institute of Lighting Engineers, and current Director of the International Committee on Illumination. Although residents had employed Mr Pollard’s services to assess this proposal, his survey work and reports would not be completed until late July 2007. However, this application is identical to the previous application (CA/03/985) in terms of siting and lighting levels. Local Residents also commissioned Mr Pollard to assess the previous application and, therefore, in the interim, the reports prepared for the previous application have been submitted in objection to this proposal. The main points of concern and objection expressed by the local residents representative, and within the submitted report, are as follows:

- “Invicta Road as it is presently formed, is classified as a semi rural area. This particular classification was used by Canterbury City Council when refusing an application for development in the road and the same reference was used by an Appeal Decision (Ref APP/J2210/A/06/2007050 on 25 May 2006, pertaining to CA/05/01387/WHI).
 - a. Para 6 of the reason for the refusal to grant permission: ‘ *The houses in Invicta Road ...allow extensive views across the fields.. hedgerow plants next to Invicta Road ..combined with its unmade nature ... gives the road a semi rural appearance...*’
The classification of semi rural is important to the process of calculating acceptable light ingress.
- The model used by Philips in 2003 did not take adequate account of the curvature of the hill in which the floodlit pitch is to be sited. Once these additional factors are taken into account, Mr Pollard, using a model that is fully accepted by the industry concludes:
 - a. The area can in no way be regarded as a normal ‘medium district brightness’ “urban” location.
 - b. ‘The light trespass values should therefore be below 5 lux, which at 6 Lux, they are not.

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- The current background lighting levels in Invicta Road were measured by Canterbury City Council in 2003 and shown to be well below the level expected in a semi-rural area.
- Today we have a clear, and up to date ruling that Invicta Road is semi rural, not urban. This essentially means that the 2003 application would breach ILE guidance.
- To add to this, it is important to be aware that the original application was based upon the assumption that there would be a need to support competition hockey – this particular requirement is the largest single reason for the intensity of the lighting proposed. Yet Kent’s own Sports Development specialist Guthrie Miller confirmed in 2003 that he ‘has no knowledge of any requirements for hockey in Whitstable’. Thus the burden of responsibility falls upon the applicant when such a level of lighting ingress is being proposed to demonstrate that there is in fact a case for all that lighting. The 2003 application does not make such a case.
- The applicant does have options to contain the lighting (i) by lowering the lighting levels to not support competition hockey and (ii) to alter the absolute position of the pitch by a few metres to reduce the light ingress.
- We have made repeated offers to Kent County Council that this community would be willing to consider the floodlit pitch if modifications could be made to its layout which would contain the level of light reaching the residences down to a tolerable level.”

*This representation, with attached reports, was forwarded to the **County Lighting Consultant** for further comment. In light of this, the following comments were received:*

“The original report from Nigel Pollard dated 4th November is based on the original lighting submission (using Abacus floodlights) which I received in July 2003. He is quite concerned about the lighting impact, as indeed I was in my response of 25 July 2003. As a consequence we received a re-submission based on Philips floodlights in late November 2003. As a consequence the lighting levels quoted in this first report are no longer relevant.

“The latter submission reduced spill light considerably as commented on in my letter of 10th December 2003 and this scheme is covered in Mr Pollards "supplementary report" dated December 2003. As you can see Mr Pollard is far happier with this scheme, (as was I), and the only area of contention is the vertical illumination falling on 2 properties in Invicta Road. This opinion is formed on the basis that the area should be classified as an E2 environmental area as opposed to an E3, which was my view.

“For your information the definitions in the ILE "Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light" is as follows:

E1 Intrinsically dark landscapes - National Parks, Areas of Outstanding natural Beauty, etc.

E2 Low district brightness area - Rural or small village locations

E3 Medium district brightness areas - Small town centre, or urban locations

E4 High District Brightness - Town/City centres with high levels of night-time activity.

“If the vertical light spill is assessed as for an E3 environment the installation complies for all properties. If however it is assessed as E2 then it does not comply for one property only and that is Fairfield where the level is calculated as 9 lux by Mr Pollard but 5.9 by the manufacturers against a limit of 5 lux. The limit for E3 is 10 lux.

“Since 2003 the Guidance notes have been revised (2005) with the description for E2 to include "dark urban areas" so while it was pretty clear cut in 2003 it is now somewhat of a

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moot point as to what a dark urban area is. It should be borne in mind that the light falling on a property from an adjacent street light is often in excess of this figure.”

Discussion

15. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan policies outlined in paragraph (11) above. Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. Issues of particular relevance include impact upon residential and local amenity, light and noise pollution and highway implications.

Residential and Local Amenity

16. The proposed flood lit pitch would be located adjacent to the north eastern boundary of the Community College site, in close proximity to residential properties on Invicta Road. As a result of this proximity, neighbouring residents and statutory consultees have expressed concern over the possible impacts of this proposal with regards to light and noise pollution. These are the two primary points of objection, and will be discussed below. However, the issue of litter has also been raised. The applicant states that litter is an ongoing problem with all colleges/schools, and is a constant battle to minimise. However, there is an incentive to the College to prevent litter being deposited in the vicinity of the proposed pitch, as that would be detrimental to the artificial grass, if 'trafficked' in. The applicant states that they have made provision for waste bins at the main entrance points, and the College would have every incentive to make sure they are used. In addition, I consider that an informative should be added to any subsequent consent requesting that the College draw this problem to the attention of students.
17. Kent and Medway Structure Plan Policy NR5 seeks to conserve and enhance the quality of Kent's environment, including noise and levels of tranquillity, and light intrusion. Therefore, development proposals must seek to minimise levels of pollution, and be deemed to be acceptable in terms of impact upon local and residential amenity. Canterbury District Local Plan Policy C40 states that when granting planning permission for development which could potentially result in pollution, conditions should be imposed to ensure subsequent mitigation measures are undertaken. The following paragraphs will assess the potential light and noise pollution associated with this application, and consider whether appropriate mitigation measures are required to ensure that residential amenity is not significantly adversely affected.

Light Pollution

18. Objections from local residents express concern over the proposed lighting level, and the light pollution that could be generated as a result of this application. In addition, local residents have commissioned and submitted a report, prepared by an independent lighting engineer, which questions the accuracy of the application documentation, and the validity of the previous 2003 planning approval. When planning application CA/03/985 was determined the site was classified as an E3 area (i.e. small town centre or urban location). The vertical light spill deemed acceptable for an E3 area is 10 lux, and as the previous submission complied with this, planning permission was granted.

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19. However, as stated at the end of paragraph 13 of this report, since 2003 the Institute of Lighting Engineers “Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light” have been revised. In 2005 the description for an E2 area was amended to include ‘dark urban areas’, where previously it included ‘rural or small village locations’ only. Although the floodlighting proposed is identical to that approved in 2003, the changes to the Guidance need to be considered and addressed. Canterbury City Council’s Environmental Health Officer states that he disagrees with the applicant’s view that night time light levels in this locality are relatively high. In addition, the independent report submitted by local residents, as summarised in paragraph 13 of this report, concludes that the area cannot be regarded as a normal medium district brightness ‘urban location’, and that the light levels should therefore be below 5 lux (as specified for E2 classified sites). Evidence is given to support the argument that the site cannot be considered to be a small town centre or urban location, suggesting the site should be classified as E2. At the time of determining the previous application the E2 classification included rural or small village locations. I remain of the view that the site should not have been classified as E2 at that time. However, the amendments to the classification, made in 2005, to include ‘dark urban areas’ within category E2 has effectively changed the assessment situation.
20. Invicta Road is an unmade road, located adjacent to school playing fields and, although lit by street lights, is dark in character. I therefore accept that the site should now be classified as a ‘dark urban area’ meaning that the light spill from the proposed development needs to conform with the guidance for an E2 site. As previously stated, the guidance for an E3 site allows for illuminance levels to reach 10 lux at local residential properties. This is reduced to 5 lux for sites within the E2 classification. The lighting specification included within this application produces a illuminance level of 5.9 lux at the closest residential property. This therefore no longer conforms with the Guidance produced by the Institute of Lighting Engineers, and is therefore unacceptable.
21. As a result of the site now being considered to fall within the E2 category, rendering the previous lighting submission unacceptable, the applicant has made a minor amendment to the proposal. Philips Lighting have reduced the tilt angle of all the luminaires by a few degrees, particularly the lamps facing the closest residential properties. This has reduced the average lux level on the pitch by 4 lux to 296 lux, which would not be noticeable in terms of usage of the pitch. However, by reducing the tilt angle the illuminance spillage at the closest residential property would be lowered from 5.9 lux to 4.67 lux. This is below the 5 lux specified within the guidance for an E2 classified site.
22. The amended lighting specifications from Philips lighting were sent for consultation with the County Council’s Lighting Consultant and Canterbury City Council. Both of the consultees agree that the proposal, as amended, complies with the guidance for an area classified as E2 as defined in the Institute of Lighting Engineers guidance, and that the proposal is acceptable. However, Canterbury City Council’s Environmental Health Officer considers that the night time light levels at this location are relatively low and fluctuate between environmental zones E1 and E2. The light trespass recommendations in the Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance is 1 lux for an E1 site and, therefore, were this site classified as E1, the lighting proposal, as amended, would not conform to this guidance. However, the E1 classification is defined as ‘intrinsically dark landscapes’, and gives examples of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The County Lighting Consultant confirms that this area cannot be considered as E1 as this only applies to intrinsically dark landscapes, such as the examples above, and not to suburban or rural fringe housing areas. Invicta Road, although unmade, is lit by streetlights. In addition, the existing College buildings have external security lighting which, in conjunction with the street lighting, provide some background lighting.

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Therefore, I do not consider that the application site can in any way be classified within category E1.

23. On this basis, I accept that the application site is a dark urban area and, therefore, falls within the new definition of an E2 site. The lighting proposal, as amended, conforms with the Institute of Lighting Engineers 'Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' and I consider this to be acceptable. Therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure that the lighting is installed as specified within the application, and that lighting levels do not exceed those stated by the applicant, I consider that light pollution would not have a significantly adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring residents.

Noise pollution

24. As detailed in paragraph 5 of this report, the applicant proposes that the all weather pitch be used in the evenings and at weekends. Although the proposed pitch would be located upon an area already marked out as a rugby pitch in the rugby season, an area for softball and/or cricket in the summer, and occasional use for 'short soccer', use of the area would increase as a result of this application. The applicant states that the existing grass pitches are used by the College during normal school hours, for after school activities and weekend tournaments, and some outside lettings. However, by providing an all weather surface and floodlighting, the use of the pitch is no longer constrained by poor weather or low lighting levels. This will undoubtedly increase its use.
25. Use of the pitch over longer hours has the potential to introduce additional noise disturbance to the closest noise sensitive receivers. In order to mitigate against this, the applicant proposes a dense band of planting between the pitch and the boundary. The applicant states that this could normally be augmented by raising the planting onto an earth mound, although the College are concerned that this could lead to a breach of security. In any instance, the County Council's Noise Consultant does not consider this to be sufficient in terms of noise mitigation, and has requested the installation of an acoustic fence. The fence should be approximately 2 metres in height, and screen properties to the north and south of Invicta Field, on Invicta Road. The acoustic fence could be provided instead of, or as well as, an earth bund. However, the planting of a substantial tree belt would be required in any instance. Subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme, and details of an acoustic fence and possible earth bunding, I am of the opinion that this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the amenity of local residents in terms of noise pollution.

Highway Implications

26. Traffic generation and impact upon the local highway network are further concerns expressed by local residents. However, use of the pitch during the school day would be primarily for existing pupils only and would, therefore, not impact upon the local highway network. The only additional use proposed during the school day is use by local Primary Schools, which would be limited to one day per week. However, in this instance pupils would arrive by mini bus/coach, the parking of which could be accommodated on site, and arrival/departure of Primary School pupils would not conflict with peak school times. However, the applicant proposes that use by the College would cease at 17.30, from which time the pitch would be available for use by local clubs, etc. The proposed hours of use are 09.00 to 21.30 Mondays to Saturdays, and 10.00 to 21.00 on Sundays. Use of the facility during evenings and weekends would generate additional traffic, although at these times the school car parks would be virtually clear. In addition, the applicant has

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proposed that overspill car parking could be provided adjacent to the Whitstable Sports Centre, to cater for any additional car parking requirements.

27. As use of the facility by the wider community would be outside normal school hours, and at times which would not conflict with peak school hours, I do not consider that this proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the local highway network. The applicant has demonstrated that additional traffic generated by the proposed facility could be accommodated within the College's existing car parks. In addition, an overflow car parking area would be available should it be required. Concern is also raised over the possible use of Clifford Road as a construction access. The applicant believes it to be extremely unlikely that the contractor would access the site via Clifford Road.
28. The Divisional Transport Manager raises no objection to the proposed development subject to all parking, including overspill, being made available whenever the sports pitch is in use. That would be a condition of consent. In addition, the Community College would be required, under planning condition, to update their School Travel Plan to include the sports pitch, and its impacts. I therefore consider that, subject to the imposition of conditions, this proposal would not have a detrimental impact upon the local highway network.

Design

29. Development Plan Policies require development to be well designed and of high quality, responding positively to the scale, layout and character of the locality. The design of the pitch itself would have a minimal impact upon the wider landscape. However, the lighting columns and ball stop fencing would be visible in the locality and, therefore, their impact upon the landscape must be considered. The eight 15 metre high lighting columns, and the 3-metre high weldmesh fence to the perimeter of the pitch, have the potential to be visually intrusive. Although the applicant has proposed to paint these elements of the proposal green, I consider that black would be a more appropriate colour finish in this locality. Painting the fencing and lighting columns would reduce their visual impact. In addition, the pitch is proposed to be set at an angle, which would leave a triangle of land between the floodlit pitch and the boundary. The applicant proposes to introduce tree and shrub planting in this area, such as quick growing evergreen trees, to provide a year round screen. This would not only aid in mitigating any noise and/or light pollution, but would visually screen the development from the closest residential properties. The acoustic fence would also be located within this triangle of land, with the proposed tree and shrub planting located to either side of it. Existing boundary planting, in conjunction with the proposed planting scheme, would aid in screening the acoustic fence, reducing its impact on the local landscape. Therefore, I consider that subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the submission of the colour finish to the fencing and lighting columns, and a full detailed scheme of landscaping and tree planting, that this proposal would not have a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of the locality and is acceptable in design terms.

Drainage

30. Local residents have suggested that the current drainage system cannot cope with existing drainage requirements, and that the provision of an all weather surface would exacerbate this problem. The applicant states that this problem relates to the Clifford Road side of the site, which is to the south of the existing school buildings, and not within close proximity to the proposed sports pitch. However, the applicant confirms that Canterbury City Council's Environmental Officer, and the local water company, were consulted by the College on the issue of a flow of surface water across Clifford Road.

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The applicant states that investigations discovered that an old pipe across Clifford Road, to a pond, had failed. This pipe was replaced by the College in August 2006, and since then the College has not been made aware of any further occurrence of the problem.

31. In addition, the Environment Agency was consulted on this application, and has raised no objections, subject to the imposition of conditions. One of these conditions requires a scheme for the disposal of surface waters to be submitted for approval, prior to the commencement of development. Submission of such details would ensure that the drainage scheme proposed for the pitch would be able to accommodate the surface run off created as a result of the artificial surface. Subject to this condition, I am satisfied that the artificial pitch would not exacerbate existing drainage problems.

Need

32. Local residents have questioned the need for the all weather sports pitch. However, the applicant states that the College's community and lettings policy, adopted in the 1980's, facilitated the building of a dual use sports centre, and a rapid growth in community activities based at the College, or within its grounds. The sports centre has enabled the college to become a pioneer in physical education-related examinations and courses. However, the College's outdoor facilities hold the college back from developing its expertise in sports education, with many of its pitches being waterlogged and unplayable for significant parts of the winter season.

33. The applicant states that the College's flagship role would be significantly enhanced by the provision of adequate outdoor facilities, which would be available for wider community use out of school hours. In addition, Sport England state that they are aware that currently there is no artificial pitch in Whitstable, and teams wishing to train have to use the only floodlit artificial pitch at Herne Bay High School, or go to Canterbury. Sport England raises no objection to the proposal and consider that the proposed facility, with community use outside of school hours, would provide a significant sporting benefit. Sport England would expect to see the development of a Community Use Agreement, which must be submitted for approval, and detail hours of availability, management, pricing structures, access to changing facilities and include a mechanism for review. That would be required under planning condition, and would ensure that the use of the pitch was managed and regularised. Therefore, I consider that a need for the facility has been demonstrated, and that a Community Use Agreement would ensure the pitch was used to its maximum potential.

Conclusion

34. In summary, I consider that this proposal would not have a significantly detrimental effect on the amenity of local residents, should Members be minded to permit, subject to the conditions outlined below. In my view it would not give rise to any significant material harm and is in accordance with the general thrust of relevant Development Plan Policies. As outlined in paragraph 2, planning permission was granted for the floodlit pitch in 2004. The minor amendment made to the scheme, in response to a change in the Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance, has ensured that the proposal accords with current guidance, and is therefore acceptable. There are no material planning considerations that indicate that the conclusion should be made otherwise. However, I recommend that various conditions be placed on any planning permission, including those outlined below.

Recommendation

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at The Community College, Whitstable – CA/07/705

35. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions covering:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- lighting to be installed in accordance with approved details, and checked on site;
- lighting levels not to exceed those specified within the application;
- a scheme of landscaping, its implementation and maintenance;
- details of colour finish to fencing and lighting columns;
- details of the provision of an acoustic fence;
- details of surface water drainage;
- a Community Use Agreement;
- programme of archaeological work;
- availability of car parking, including overspill;
- revision of the School Travel Plan;
- control over hours of use;
- control over the extinguishing of lights;
- hours of working during construction;

Case officer – Mary Green

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Background documents - See section heading
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