

TWC/2017/0446

Madeley Court Football Pitches, Court Road, Madeley, Telford, Shropshire  
Construction of a synthetic grass multi-function football and hockey pitch, changing rooms, fencing, 6no. 18.3m high floodlights for the pitches and 4no. 8m high new street lights to the existing ski centre car park and 7no. 8m high street lights to the new car park adjacent the new pitches, associated access and car parking and landscaping including earth bunds. **\*\*AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED AND AMENDED DESCRIPTION\*\***.

**APPLICANT**

Commercial Services, Stuart Davidson

**RECEIVED**

31/05/2017

**PARISH**

Madeley

**WARD**

Madeley and Sutton Hill

**OFFICER** Kate Stephens

**1. PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 This is a Council application for a new synthetic multi-function sports pitch opposite the Telford Ski Centre along Court Street, with associated parking, access, floodlighting and landscaping. This is to replace the existing grass playing field. The proposal comprises in more detail:-
- construction of a synthetic grass multi-function pitch that can be used as an 11-a-side football pitch, a 9-a-side football pitch, 3no. 5/6-a-side football pitches or as an 11-a-side hockey pitch.
  - erection of 4-team changing room (as a single-storey extension to the existing ski lodge building),
  - erection of fencing between 4m high around sides and 6m at the ends of the pitches,
  - formation of new car park (40 spaces) and formation of a new access off Court Street,
  - erection of 8no x 15m high floodlights around the pitches,
  - erection of 7no. x 8m high floodlights around new car park,
  - erection of 4no. 8m high floodlights around existing Ski Centre car park,
  - associated landscaping including 2.5m high earth bunds around the pitches.
- 1.2 It is intended that the pitch will be available for use by schools, sports clubs, local groups and individuals from 9am – 10.15pm Monday to Friday and between 9am – 8.15pm on Saturdays and Sundays.
- 1.3 Amendments have been made following ecological concerns about the impact of the floodlighting on bats. As a result the following changes have been made:-
- the number of floodlight columns around the sports pitch has been reduced from 8 to 6, but they will be 3.3m higher (now 18.3m).

- a 3m wide 'dark corridor' as a bat fly zone has been created along the two woodland sides of the pitches,
  - the landscape earth bunds will be 2.5m high.
  - floodlights will be fitted with LED light fittings to reduce lux lighting levels for bats.
- 1.4 Residents and consultees have been re-consulted on the amendments. The 14 day consultation period expires 12<sup>th</sup> December, so members will be updated at Planning Committee of any comments received between the writing of this report and the committee meeting.
- 1.5 The application form and plans are also accompanied by the following documents:
- Planning Statement
  - Design and Access Statement
  - Transport Statement
  - Floodlight details and Lighting Assessment
  - Ground Investigation Report
  - Coal Mining Risk Assessment
  - Flood Risk Assessment
  - Noise Assessment
  - Preliminary Ecology Appraisal and Bat Surveys
  - Arboricultural Impact Assessment
  - Statement of Community Involvement

## **2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 The site is currently grassed open space/playing fields used as football pitches located approx. 250m north of the edge of Madeley and 4.5kms south of Telford town centre. The site is located along Court Street opposite the Telford Ski Centre. To the east of the site is the Silkin Way.
- 2.2 Telford Ski Centre, Court Street Medical Practice and the recently approved NuPlace residential development are located to the west on the opposite side of Court Street. Madeley Court Hotel (a Grade II\* Listed Building which also includes Grade I and II buildings and structures within its curtilage) is located to the north beyond another grassed football pitch.
- 2.3 Residential properties on Coronation Crescent, consisting predominately of two-storey semi-detached houses and bungalows, back onto the south eastern boundary of the application site. Two other residential properties are located within relatively close proximity of the application site. 'Rothlyn' (the former school caretaker's house) backs onto the western side of the application site and proposed new car park. No.61 Court Street is located to the south west of the site but is separated from the site by the Air Cadets building.

- 2.4 The wooded area to the north of the site is a Wildlife site, as shown on the proposals map for the Wrekin Local Plan and is also now a Local Nature Reserve (designated in 2016). The site is also designated as Green Network in both the Wrekin Local Plan and emerging Telford & Wrekin Local Plan. The site also lies within the adopted Madeley Neighbourhood Development Plan.

#### **4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) – the NPPF is not the development plan, but it is a material consideration in this case because all of the borough's development plan policies have to be viewed in the light of this more recent national guidance.

The NPPF acknowledges that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make important contributions to health and well-being of communities (para 73). Local authorities are required to plan for such uses and to generally enhance the sustainability of communities (para 70). Also existing sports pitches are to be protected and not built on unless there is a replacement of equivalent or better provision (para 74). Paras 109 and 118 relate to the conservation and enhancement of the urban environment and set out principles to ensure any significant harm is mitigated or compensated for.

4.2 Core Strategy policies (CS)

- CS3: Telford
- CS10: Community Facilities
- CS11: Open Space
- CS12: Natural Environment

4.3 Saved Wrekin Local Plan policies (WLP)

- UD2: Design Criteria
- OL2: Designated Areas
- OL4: Green Network
- OL6: Open Land
- LR4: Outdoor Recreational Open Space
- T4: Development Principles

4.4 Madeley Neighbourhood Development Plan

Whilst there is no specific designation for this site, the plan refers to the intended upgrade of the pitches (referred to as Madeley Court Ski Lodge playing pitch).

- GS2: County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, registered Village Green and Habitats and Species of Principal Importance.
- TR1: Enhancing Accessibility and Transport Linkages.

4.5 Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (TWLP)

The Telford & Wrekin Local Plan is an emerging local plan and is not yet the development plan for the purposes of determining planning applications. However, it has been through Examination in Public and the Local Plan Inspector has recently published his Report and Main Modifications (6 Nov

2017). In accordance with the guidance in the NPPF significant weight can now be given to policies, depending on the degree of proposed change.

The following policies have not been subject to any changes so can be afforded significant weight.

- NE3: Existing public open space
- COM1: Community facilities
- C5: Design of parking

The following policies are relevant, but have been subject to some objection and are afforded reduced weight:-

- SP4: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- NE1: Biodiversity and geodiversity
- NE2: Trees, hedgerows and woodlands
- NE6: Green Network
- BE1: Design Criteria

## **5. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES:**

### **Standard consultation responses**

- 5.1 Madeley Town Council - Support
- 5.2 TWC Highways – support subject to conditions  
Conditions for parking, loading, unloading & turning and gates to be set 5m back.
- 5.3 TWC Healthy Spaces – No comment
- 5.4 TWC Drainage – Support subject to conditions  
Conditions for foul & surface water drainage scheme and restrict surface water runoff flows
- 5.5 TWC Public Protection (Pollution Control) – No comment
- 5.6 TWC Public Protection (Contaminated Land) – Support subject to standard land contamination condition
- 5.7 TWC Arboricultural - Object subject to conditions  
Protective fencing is required for retained trees around the boundary of the site given their size, stature, proximity to footways and visual amenity values.
- 5.8 Shropshire Council – No comment
- 5.9 Shropshire Fire service – Comment  
As part of the planning process, consideration should be given to the information contained within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service’s “Fire Safety Guidance for Commercial and Domestic Planning Applications” which

can be found using the following link:  
<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/planning-applications>

#### 5.10 Shropshire Wildlife Trust – Comment

- The proposed development is immediately adjacent to Madeley Court Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site.
- The proposals do have the potential to impact on the ecological interest and community's enjoyment of the LNR. We would therefore suggest the following mitigation measures.
- Replacing two pitches with one creates an opportunity for habitat creation that could also provide a buffer to light and noise. At other times such a natural buffer area could provide a facility for dog walking and informal community activity.
- While the 'traditional' football pitch may be of low ecological value we would anticipate that an artificial surface would provide no ecological value at all. Therefore enhancing the surrounding buffer would help to compensate for this small impact.
- It would appear that there is no need for any vegetation clearance, but lighting could cause an impact and needs to be in line with accepted guidance e.g. the Bat Conservation Trust Interim Guidance: Recommendations to help minimise the impact artificial lighting.
- We would concur with the findings of the Absolute Ecology report and their recommendations.

#### **Neighbour consultation responses**

#### 5.11 18 letters of objection have been received on the original scheme raising the following issues, which are summarised below:

- It's the only large open field in the area – already lost land for building Madeley Academy and there's a leisure centre at Abraham Darby school.
- Will result in loss of a field that has rare beauty and wildlife.
- Field regularly used by dog walkers and families/children enjoying a kick about.
- Will restrict public access to land for local people.
- It acts as a town park and buffer to the Local nature Reserve.
- Will impact on wildlife.
- Fencing and building will be an eyesore.

#### 5.12 Shropshire Army Cadet Force - Object

- The army cadet detachment is at the top of the playing fields and this will leave the kids at the detachment with a disadvantage, as we regularly use the playing fields for training, field craft lessons and PT.
- Due to the plans involving both the fields and the grass directly next to the detachment it will leave the kids with no outdoor space to be able to learn and practise in.
- A lot of the lessons and training is best conducted outdoors and we do not have enough space to be able to do most of the lessons within the detachment gates.

**Following re-consultation on the amended plans**, the following comments have been received to date. The public consultation expires 12 December, so Members will be updated on any additional comments received:-

5.13 Shropshire Council – No comment

5.14 TWC Public Protection (Pollution Control) – No comment

5.15 TWC Public Protection (Contaminated Land) – Support subject to standard land contamination condition

5.16 TWC Ecology – Support subject to conditions

- the comments from Shropshire Wildlife Trust 20/06/17 “the proposals ... have the potential to impact on the ecological interest and communities’ enjoyment of the LNR” have been noted.
- following changes to the scheme include:
  - The number of floodlight columns around the pitch has been reduced from 8 to 6
  - A 3m wide bat fly zone has been created along the two woodland sides of the pitches
  - Landscaping earth bunds will be created 2.5m high
  - Floodlight specifications will reduce lux lighting levels for bats.
- bat roosts were unlikely to be present within the surveyed buildings.
- surveys recorded no evidence of badger activity within the site.
- no further consideration in regards to dormouse presence is required.
- no potential for the site to support water vole or otter.
- the site is generally unsuitable for reptiles and consider that reptiles are absent.
- the proposals are unlikely to impact upon great crested newts, quoting previous survey results from 2008 and 2012 as supporting evidence.
- the habitats present on site are generally common and therefore would not provide ‘much potential for rare invertebrate species’.
- In conclusion, the proposed future use of the site accords with the principles of the green network as set out in para 6.4.4 of the emerging Telford and Wrekin Local Plan. It is also considered that the current level of green infrastructure provision incorporated into the scheme would continue to provide the required structural connectivity to enable the green network to continue to function at this location whilst amendments to lighting regimes and the provision of the 3m dark corridor will mitigate for any adverse impacts upon bat assemblages in the local area.
- Recommend conditions relating to nesting/roosting boxes, Method Statements for Breeding Birds and Amphibians, landscaping, long term habitat management plan, biodiversity monitoring strategy, construction lighting, boundary trees and woodland, and infromatives about badgers, bats, GCNs.

5.17 3 letters of objection, summarised as follows:-

- This amendment is still unacceptable!
- This is a beautiful area and an ideal spot for kids and dog walkers.

- Fully object to this proposals as there is a sport and leisure centre 5 minutes up the road at Abraham Darby without ruining even more greenspace.
- This is un-needed and unwanted and a complete waste of money.
- There is enough building going on around here - leave the green space here alone. There are elderly people on this street, if nothing else at least consider the noise pollution and how will affect them.
- The existing playing field is free to use.

## **6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:**

6.1 Having regard to the development plan policies and other material planning considerations, including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- The principle of the development
- Ecology, Trees and Green Network
- Highways and parking
- Impact on residential amenity of neighbouring properties
- Design

### **6.2 The principle of the development**

6.2.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act (2004) states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration to be taken into account when considering planning applications.

6.2.2 The NPPF recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation make can make an important contribution to general health and well-being, and that any loss of sports pitches/playing fields is replaced by provision of equivalent or better. It advises local authorities to plan positively for this. The Core Strategy includes policies and spatial objectives that seek to provide sufficient quantity and quality of open space for sport, recreation, leisure. The emerging TWLP maintains these themes

6.2.3 WLP Policy LR4 'Outdoor Recreational Open Space' states that the Council will refuse applications for any new development if it would result in the loss of existing recreational open space which is not replaced in a suitable alternative location to an equal or improved specification. This is carried through by Core Strategy policy CS10 'Community Facilities' that resists loss of existing community facilities, unless there is appropriate alternative provision. Policy CS9 'Social Inclusion' seeks to improve social inclusion and access to facilities and services. WLP Policy OL6 seeks to protect locally important incidental land from development where the land contributes to character and appearance of the area, has value as a recreational space or important as a natural habitat and Policy CS11 'Open Spaces' seeks to protect and enhance

areas of informal and formal open space from development, unless there are significant benefits and the land doesn't contribute to open space standards. The emerging TWLP has similar policies to protect community facilities, support new ones and encourage/enhance sporting opportunities and this is carried through in policies NE3 and COM1.

- 6.2.4 The site falls within the Madeley Neighbourhood Development Plan, but the site does not have any allocation. However, the Plan refers to the pitch being upgraded, and there are several policies relating to the nearby local nature reserve and ensuring that any new development does not adversely impact on this. Ecology and wildlife will be discussed later in the report.
- 6.2.5 The proposal will see the loss of a grassed playing field and officers acknowledge that local residents value it for informal recreation and dog walking, as set out in consultation responses in section 5. The site would still remain as open space and would retain its recreational/sporting value, although it would have a synthetic surface.
- 6.2.6 The use of the existing pitch for sports is currently limited. Being grass, it is prone to drainage issues and can only be used twice a week. There are no changing facilities and no lighting, so use is limited to daylight hours. The proposed synthetic pitch would be a full size multi-function pitch that could be flexibly used as an 11-a-side football pitch, a 9-a-side football pitch, 3no 5/6-a-side football pitches or an 11 a-side hockey pitch, hence offering greater opportunities for different sporting groups to use the facilities. With floodlighting it can be used all year round and into the evenings. The dedicated car park and new changing facilities would further help improve the facilities.
- 6.2.7 These various factors will serve to increase usage and significantly enhance quality and accessibility of sports pitches for the wider community for the Borough. Officers consider that this qualitative and quantitative improvement outweighs the loss of the existing grass pitches. Sport England Guidance (Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sport 2015) sets out the various advantages of artificial pitches over grass such as greater durability, more efficient use of space, increased usage, greater flexibility and reduction in maintenance. Furthermore, the proposal would meet the need for a 3G pitch in the south Telford area, which has been included in the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (2016).

### **6.3 Ecology, Trees and Green Network**

- 6.3.1 The wooded area to the north and east of the application site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve. The site itself is also located within the Green Network. As such WLP Policies OL2 'Designated Areas', OL3 'Green Network' and OL4 'Development in the Green Network' apply to this proposal. Emerging TWLP policies, NE1 and NE2 (Trees, hedgerows and woodlands) and NE6 'Green Network' carry this through. Development which is likely to adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, a Wildlife Site will not be permitted unless there are benefits that significantly outweigh the

importance of the area and the loss of any habitat must also be fully compensated for.

- 6.3.2 Replacing an area of open space (grass) with a synthetic pitch enclosed with metal fencing will alter some of the wildlife patterns in the area. There have been concerns that the floodlighting will adversely impact on the flight paths of foraging bats and interfere with their navigation. Additional assessment has since been made and submitted on the impact the floodlighting will have on bat foraging/navigational flight lines.
- 6.3.3 As a result the scheme has been amended. There will be a 3m wide flight gap between the pitch and the woodland areas to provide a bat flight corridor. There is also a reduction in the number of floodlight columns around the pitches from 8 to 6. However, in order to still achieve adequate light coverage across the pitches, the floodlight columns are now 3.3m taller (now 18.3m). Furthermore the floodlighting has been amended and fitted with LED light fittings to reduce LUX lighting levels for the bats, as required by the Ecologists, and are designed not to emit light – this also benefits nearby residents as it will avoid light glow.
- 6.3.4 Appropriate tree surveys have been undertaken and reports submitted. The proposal will involve the removal of hawthorn tree, a small group of trees and a short section of hawthorn hedge. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment deemed them to be of low quality and that their loss could be adequately compensated for with new planting/landscaping. All other trees/hedgerows around the perimeter of the site and beyond will be retained.
- 6.3.5 The Green Network policies seek to protect that resource in order to achieve the six aims of the Green Network: i) To maintain Telford's image as an attractive place to live and work with extensive green areas that cumulatively create a high quality environment and which will continue to attract investment into the Town; ii) to retain and enhance the individual identity and/or sense of local community of parts of the Town through the separation of built up areas with green wedges; iii) to provide easily accessible 'green lungs' to meet the growing aspirations of the public for a better quality of life within the Town, as these spaces relieve the sense of congestion and pressure that are felt in densely built up areas and introduce the visual variety that people seek; iv) to provide an appropriate supply of open land to meet the diverse recreational needs of an expanding population, combining the more formal parkland and recreation areas with the wider landscaped areas valuable for informal recreation; v) to protect, enhance and maintain Telford's ecological and geological heritage of diverse natural habitats and the archaeological legacy of its early place in the Industrial Revolution; vi) to provide open space linkages through which footpath, cycleway and ecological corridors can join different parts of the Town.
- 6.3.6 The proposal will accord with these aims, in particular it will retain the open nature of the site and area, and retain the recreational use. Whilst some residents see the loss of the open grassed area as a loss of wildlife and informal recreation, this has to be balanced against the wider community

benefits of the proposal with enhanced sport/recreation facilities and increased community involvement overall, and the proposed wildlife mitigation. Officers consider that the proposal accords with the Green Network policies.

## **6.4 Highways and parking**

- 6.4.1 WLP Policy T4 'Development Principles' advises that leisure developments (Use Class D2) must be located close to an existing public transport route with a regular service unless the applicant can demonstrate that the development will be made highly accessible by public transport. Similarly emerging TWLP policy COM1 expects new facilities to be located in places with good accessibility by foot, cycle and public transport.
- 6.4.2 The site is located close to a regular public transport bus route, and is also easily accessible on foot and by bike. Indeed it is situated adjacent to the Silkin Way, which is a bridleway that runs north/south through urban Telford and which forms part of the National Cycle Network (as route No. 55).
- 6.4.3 Vehicular access will be off Court Street, that links to a wider distributor road Parkway. The new car park (opposite the ski centre) will provide 40 parking spaces, which can be used in conjunction with the existing ski centre car park which also has 40 spaces. There will also be new cycle parking facilities.
- 6.4.4 The submitted Transport Assessment refers to most journeys are likely to take place outside of the weekday peak periods and that the impact on the local highway network will be limited. There are no parking standard guidelines for open recreational space/facilities, but due to the site's sustainable and accessible location Officers consider the parking provision to be adequate. Furthermore the Council's Highways Engineers support the proposal, so there are no technical highway reasons to withhold consent.

## **6.5 The impact on residential amenity of neighbouring properties**

- 6.5.1 The nearest residential properties are on Coronation Crescent that back onto the site – both the pitches and new car park. The back garden fences of these properties are approx. 25-43m away from the new fences around the pitches. There is also a bungalow (former caretaker's dwelling) that has the pitches and earth bunding to the north west and the new car park to the south. The occupiers of these dwellings will be most impacted upon. They is likely to be an intensification of use and greater levels of activity and floodlights (with associated longer hours of usage including into the evenings and at weekends). The issue is whether this is significantly detrimental when weighed against the improvement to the Borough's recreational and open spaces provision in the south side of Telford, the benefit to the wider community and the national commitment to improve open space/playing field provision and improve health and well-being.
- 6.5.2 The 2.5m high landscaped earth bunds will help screen the pitches from immediate view from the properties on Crescent Road that back onto the site.

The bunds will also serve as an acoustic buffer. Whilst there is likely to be some increase in noise due to the increase in use of the pitches (particularly later in the evenings due to the floodlighting), the site is already an existing playing field intended for community use and used for informal kick-about, with associated noise arising from that.

- 6.5.3 Local residents also comment that the existing playing field is used by dog walkers and families for kick-about, and the Army Cadets comment that they use the playing field for some of their outdoor drills and exercises. However, there is another open playing field to the north of the site that can still be used and the car-free Silkin Way is close by. Whilst those who use the site for these purposes may be affected, officers consider that the impact has to be weighed against the wider community benefits, and that any impacts will not be significantly harmful to warrant a refusal.

## **6.6 Design**

- 6.6.1 The sports pitches will be surrounded by new green metal fencing that will range in height from 4m to 6m (behind goal areas). Whilst there will be a change from the simple open grassed area, to a fenced synthetic facility, officers consider that this will not adversely detract from the overall openness of the area and there will still be a backdrop of trees.
- 6.6.2 The floodlighting will be a new feature, but will be fitted with LED fittings to reduce light levels and light spillage. The taller 18.3m high columns around the sports pitch will be read against the context of the 4-6m high fencing and the wooded backdrop to the site. The new 6m high lighting columns for the new car park and existing ski car park will not be unduly prominent in this urban environment, when the average street lighting column is 10m high and the area has seen more recent new housing and retail development nearby.
- 6.6.3 The changing room block will be constructed as a single storey extension to the existing ski lodge building (not the boot hire building). It will be timber clad to respond to the existing timber building and will be an appropriate addition. There is adequate space on site to accommodate the extension. The new facility will provide changing room facilities (there are none at the moment) able to accommodate 4 teams. As such the proposal accords with the design policies UD2, CS15 and emerging policy BE1

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The proposal will see the loss of the existing grass pitch. However, it will be replaced by an enhanced community facility in the same location and of better quality and capacity, which will increase usage, opportunities and accessibility to a wider community. This is endorsed in principle by Sport England, the NPPF and local Development Plan policies and will meet the need for a 3G pitch in the south Telford area, which has been included in the Council's playing Pitch Strategy (2016).

7.2 The proposal will still accord with the Council's Green Network aims and policies. The proposal as amended will not detrimentally affect the nearby Local Nature Reserve or protected species wildlife and the amendments to the floodlighting has mitigated the impacts on bats and their foraging/navigational flight lines in the vicinity of the site. There will be an increase in usage and activity at the site, especially with the floodlighting and later hours of use. Due to the distance separation, the design of the floodlighting to avoid light spillage and the earth bunding, Officers consider that the impact on nearby residents will not be significantly detrimental when weighed against the wider community benefits of the scheme. The proposal represents an acceptable development in a sustainable location that will see the Borough's sport and recreation facilities greatly enhanced.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation to the Planning Committee on this application is to **GRANT FULL PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the following conditions (and with delegate authority to agree any others that may be necessary) relating to:

Time scale to implement consent

Materials of changing rooms

Drainage

Highways

Ecology

Land contamination

Trees

Hours (9:00 until 22:15 hours Mon to Fri and 9:00 – 20:15 hours Sat & Sun)

Floodlight hours (timed to be off at 22:15 hours Mon to Fri and by 20:15 hours Sat & Sun).

Informatives