

## Item No. 13

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER</b>	<b>CB/12/02894/FULL</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Land west of Larksfield Surgery, Arlesey Road, Stotfold, Hitchin, SG5 4HB</b>
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Proposal of two Football Pitches as well as Toilet Facilities and provision for informal car parking spaces (x30)</b>
<b>PARISH</b>	<b>Stotfold</b>
<b>WARD</b>	<b>Stotfold &amp; Langford</b>
<b>WARD COUNCILLORS</b>	<b>Cllrs Saunders &amp; Saunders</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	<b>Samantha Boyd</b>
<b>DATE REGISTERED</b>	<b>16 August 2012</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>	<b>11 October 2012</b>
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>Stotfold Town Council</b>
<b>AGENT</b>	<b>B3 Architects</b>
<b>REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE</b>	<b>The application site is on Council owned land and objections to the proposal have been received.</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED DECISION</b>	<b>Full Application - Granted</b>

### Site Location:

The site occupies an area of approximately 25 acres to the west of Stotfold, within the settlement envelope. It is bound by Arlesey Road to the south, fields to the north and west and the rear boundaries of residential properties in Vaughan Road and Larksfield Surgery to the east.

The site is currently used for agricultural purposes but owned by Central Bedfordshire Council.

### The Application:

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the land to two football pitches, toilets and parking provision for thirty cars.

Note - some of the literature submitted with the application refers to three football pitches. The Applicant's Agent has confirmed that permission is sought for two pitches at this stage as identified on plan GA/EL120 rev A. Any reference made to future development refers to the possible relocation of Stotfold Town Football Club from Roker Park, however this would be subject to a separate planning permission at a later stage.

The proposal consists of two football pitches located to the north east end of the site. One pitch is to be a full sized pitch, the other as dual use for one pitch or three mini pitches. Along the boundary with the residential properties in Vaughan Road, a grass bund is proposed with planting between the boundary fencing and the mini pitches.

A parking area for 30 vehicles is provided in the south west corner of the site along with prefabricated male and female toilets. There is also an accessible toilet with ramped access.

Access to the site is via the existing access to the agricultural fields west and north of the application site.

## **RELEVANT POLICIES:**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

East of England Plan (May 2008)

### **Core Strategy and Development Management Policies - North 2009**

CS3 Healthy and Sustainable Communities  
CS14, DM3 High Quality Development  
CS4 Linking Communities - Accessibility and Transport  
DM4 Development Within and Beyond Settlement Envelopes  
DM15 Landscape and Woodland  
DM15 Biodiversity

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Design in Central Bedfordshire: A Guide for Development

### **Planning History**

MB/08/00859/Full      Proposed community/leisure facility and relocation of Stotfold Football Club.    Granted 17/07/08

### **Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)**

Stotfold Town Council      No objections

Neighbours      No comments received from neighbouring residential properties

Letter from adjacent agricultural tenant with concerns that the proposed boundary fence will interfere with the agricultural access. Also there are no measures in place to stop vehicles parking in the access track or the adjacent agricultural hardstanding.

## **Consultations/Publicity responses**

Site Notice x 2 displayed 23/08/12

Archaeology

Site has potential to contain archaeological remains - no objection to development but condition recommended.

Sport England

Planning Policy Objective 2 of Sport Englands Spatial Planning for Sport and Active Recreation: Development Control Guidance Note (2009) (appendix 2) supports the development of new facilities that will secure opportunities to take part in sport.

The playing fields have been proposed to help meet the increasing demand for playing pitches associated with the increase in the population of Stotfold associated with new housing development. The Football Association have confirmed that Stotfold FC have highlighted a need for additional pitches in recent years.

Sport England therefore support the planning application in principle.

### *Pitch Quality*

It is important that the ground conditions and pitch specification are given careful specialist consideration in terms of topography, soils, drainage and turf preparation to ensure the pitches are fit for purpose. No reference has been made to any such studies in the planning application therefore Sport England recommend a ground conditions assessment be carried out and recommended scheme implemented.

### *Pitch layout and design*

The current layout and pitch design has raised some concern. It is unclear whether the groundworks (ground preparations) would apply to the area covered by the pitches or the playing field as a whole. It is inefficient from a practical and cost perspective to undertake the ground works only in the area where the pitches are proposed. there is concern that this would not be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs to the clubs in the Stotfold area. Also it is unclear whether there has been

consultation with local clubs to demonstrate the scheme will meet the needs of local clubs.

#### *Future relocation of Stotfold FC*

While it is not currently proposed to relocate Stotfold FC to the site, it is important that the site is planned so that it allows the club to be relocated here in the future if the longer term project for the site progresses. No information would appear to be provided about where exactly a future pitch for the first team would be located including all the ancillary facilities suitable for a club at Stotfold FC's level. Problems could arise at a later date if there is insufficient space resulting in the natural turf pitches proposed in the current scheme being redeveloped. Sport England request an indicative site layout showing how the site can accommodate all the required facilities should Stotfold FC relocate to the site in the future.

#### *Changing facilities*

Concern is raised that the temporary building will only provide toilet facilities for users of the playing field. Sport England and the Football Association would expect all new playing fields to be supported by appropriate changing facilities. Consequently there would be no facilities for players/officials to change before or after matches and have team talks. This is considered to be unacceptable on a playing field of this scale and nature.

It is acknowledged that such facilities are likely to be provided if a more significant facility is developed on the site however at this stage there is no certainty that such a scheme will be implemented. There is a real concern that the proposed temporary toilet facility may become a permanent facility if implemented.

Sport England object to the omission of changing facilities for players and officials. The concern can be addressed by providing a temporary building that incorporates adequate player/official changing rooms suitable for the scheme. The Football Association share Sport England's views on this matter.

#### Public Protection

Concern is raised regarding noise from the players and spectators using the football pitches causing a detriment to amenity and potentially a statutory noise nuisance. The two pitches are to be sited very close to the back gardens of the existing residential properties in Vaughan Road.

Public Protection objected to the outline development which was approved at DM committee in July 2008, and based the information submitted with this current scheme the objection is raised again as the applicant has not demonstrated that the development will not cause unacceptable detriment to the amenity of existing properties in Vaughan Road.

The noise report submitted with the outline consent identified that the development was likely to cause significant detriment to residential amenity even with a 2.4m noise barrier proposed along the boundary with Vaughan Road. There does not appear to be space within the site to facilitate moving the pitches further away from Vaughan Road using the existing doctor's surgery building as a barrier.

*Revised plans*

Following concerns from Public Protection Officers the applicant has revised the scheme to include a landscaped bund along the boundary with Vaughan Road properties.

Additional comments as follows:

The proposed post and rail fence will not act as any form of acoustic barrier. The perimeter fence should be close boarded timber fence with no gaps which would reduce noise level and benefit the properties in Arlesey Road. The height of the proposed bund is not specified, however 2.5m is suggested, also the bund would need to curve around the northern and southern boundaries to block the line of sight.

There has been no clarification on the proposed hours of use.

As the applicant has not submitted any acoustic data to support the proposal, when the site is operational it may result in a Statutory Nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Highways	No objections to modified access arrangements subject to conditions
Highways Agency	No objections
Tree and Landscape	No objections - opportunity for additional landscaping within the site.

Ecology

There is minimal landscaping on the site. Far more could be done to enhance the boundaries of the site to achieve a net gain for biodiversity, the use of native hedging would be beneficial and consideration should be given to a wildflower seed mix on the periphery of the 25 acre site. Corn buntings have previously been identified to frequent the site while it has been in arable production and the use of a species rich wildflower mix to provide seed heads on which birds and insects can feed would be desirable. As this site will possibly be the future site for the town football club any landscape planting done now will be better established as a buffer to the surrounding countryside.

RSPB No comments received  
Play and Open Space Officer No comments received  
Sustainable Transport No comments received  
Discrimination Officer No comments  
Community Safety Officer No comments received  
Architectural Liaison Officer - Beds Police No objections  
Public Protection - contamination - no comments received at time of preparing report

## Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

1. Policy
2. The effect upon the character and appearance of the area
3. The impact on neighbouring amenity
4. Highway safety
5. Other considerations

## Considerations

### 1. Policy

In terms of Policy, there is local and national support for recreational facilities to support the local community.

Paragraph 73 of The National Planning Policy Framework states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

Central Bedfordshire Council's Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document - Policy CS3: Healthy and Sustainable Communities seeks to secure the provision of appropriate infrastructure for growing communities by supporting in principle, the upgrading of community, education, open space, recreation, sports, play and health facilities.

Policy CS14 and DM3 set out design principles for all new development. All proposals for new development, including extensions will, amongst other criteria:

- be appropriate in scale and design to their setting.
- contribute positively to creating a sense of place and respect local distinctiveness through design and use of materials.
- respect the amenity of surrounding properties.

As such the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable.

The site has previously been granted permission for a new community/leisure facility and the relocation of Stotfold Football Club under planning permission MB/08/00859 dated 17 July 2008. The permission has now lapsed however there has been no significant change in Policy since the permission was granted.

## **2. The effect on the character and appearance of the area**

The proposed perimeter fencing would consist of a three rail high timber post and rail fence with an approximate height of 1.2m, a design which is considered to be acceptable given that the site is on the edge of the town and is a semi rural location. Details of the fencing should be submitted as a condition of approval. Planting along the fencing is considered to be essential to soften the visual impact and again can be secured via a condition.

The proposed toilet facility is to be a standard design temporary building located adjacent to the parking area in the south west corner of the site. The building would be visible from Arlesey Road, however having regard to its temporary nature and functional need, the building is considered to be acceptable and additional planting along the Arlesey Road boundary would go some way towards screening the building.

In visual terms, the proposal is not considered to have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the area.

## **3. Impact on neighbouring amenity**

Neighbouring properties that adjoin the site include those in Vaughan Road, who adjoin the eastern boundary, and those on the opposite side of Arlesey Road.

The main impact on neighbouring amenity would be the noise associated with the use of the football pitches and the additional disturbance from vehicle movements. Concern has been raised by Public Protection Officer with regard to the potential noise impact from the development. The applicant has not submitted any acoustic data to support the proposal, however the acoustic report submitted with the previous planning application states that the background noise level at these properties is low therefore noise from the use of the pitches is likely to be significantly above the existing background level. This will result in some detriment to amenity.

It is proposed to provide a landscaped bund adjacent to the boundary that adjoins the rear gardens of properties in Vaughan Road. No details have been supplied in terms of the height of the bund however Public Protection Officer's recommend that a minimum of 2.5m would be required to mitigate noise while the pitches are in use. It is noted that the previous approved planning permission also included an area of grass banking along this boundary, its height and details secured via a condition of approval. It is also noted that the proposed pitches are in a similar position to that previously approved. It is acknowledged that when games are being played there would be additional noise, however given that permission has previously been granted for a much larger scheme, it would be difficult to sustain a refusal reason based on a loss of amenity due to the use of the football pitches. Provided the landscaped bund is implemented prior to first use, the proposal is considered to be acceptable.

Properties in Arlesey Road may also experience noise from the use of the development, however these properties are on the opposite side of the road and some distance from the proposed pitches.

In terms of additional traffic, the access to the site is proposed utilising and existing agricultural access opposite properties in Arlesey Road. It is not considered that the scale of the proposal would result in an adverse impact upon the amenities of the nearby neighbours, therefore the proposal is considered to be acceptable in this respect.

Whilst the proposal will affect neighbouring properties to some degree, the impact is not sufficient to warrant the refusal of planning permission and conditions will be imposed to protect the amenities of the neighbouring properties.

#### **4. Highway safety**

Although the application forms state there will be no changes to the means of access, the application drawings and accompanying Transport Statement clearly show the existing agricultural access is to be widened to 7.3m with 9m radii. Vision splays in excess of 2.4 x 43m are available within the highway limits. The modified access is therefore considered to be acceptable for the scale of the development proposed. A total of 30 parking spaces is to be provided, which is considered to be acceptable for two football pitches. It is notes that there is sufficient room within the site for overspill parking on the surrounding grassed areas if necessary.



In terms of highway safety the proposal is considered to be acceptable subject to conditions.

## **5. Other considerations**

### Archaeology

The proposed development site is set in a rich and extensive archaeological landscape around the valleys of the Pix Brook and Rivers Ivel and Hiz. This landscape contains evidence of occupation from the Neolithic period onwards. Although the site itself has not yet produced any direct evidence of archaeological remains, its size and location mean that it has considerable potential to contain components of the recognised archaeological landscape.

The proposed development site has high potential to contain archaeological remains of the identified archaeological landscape in the surrounding area dating from the Neolithic period onwards. Development will have a negative and irreversible impact on any archaeological remains at the site causing a loss of the heritage asset's significance. Given the scale and nature of the proposed development this does not represent an over-riding constraint provided that the applicant takes appropriate measures to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset. This will comprise the investigation and recording of any archaeological remains that are affected by the development.

The *NPPF* (paragraph 128) says that where a development proposal includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest developers should submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. The *Design and Access Statement* accompanying the application contains a brief section on archaeology (11.0). This acknowledges the archaeological potential of the proposed development site.

### Landscaping

There would be ample opportunity for additional planting on this site either by some small groups of trees in the corners of the site or some additional native hedge planting along the boundaries, if funds are limited then additional planting to the front boundary would be preferable.

### Ecology

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on public bodies to have regard to conserving biodiversity when exercising their functions.

The proposals include minimal landscaping as a buffer for the new toilet block. Far more could be done to enhance the boundaries of the site to achieve a net gain for biodiversity, the use of native hedging would be beneficial and consideration should be given to a wildflower seed mix on the periphery of the 25 acre site. Corn buntings have previously been identified to frequent the site while it has been in arable production and the use of a species rich wildflower mix to provide seed heads on which birds and insects can feed would be desirable.

As this site will possibly be the future site for the town football club any landscape planting done now will be better established as a buffer to the surrounding countryside. No mention is made of the use of flood lighting, but again, it is possible in the future that this will be a requirement. Flood lighting on a settlement edge such as this with no buffers, unlike the existing Roker Park which has a high screen of Poplars, will have a significant impact on nocturnal wildlife and as such should be given particular consideration to minimise spillage to the wider countryside.

An appropriate landscaping scheme can be secured via a condition of planning approval.

#### Use of the adjacent agricultural land

Concerns have been raised regarding the use and access of the adjacent farmland. The agricultural track forms the western boundary of the application site and provides access to the farm land at the rear. The tenants of the surrounding agricultural land are concerned that the location of the fence would impede access for farm machinery as it is located along the boundary of the site. The track is single width therefore any agricultural machinery being pulled by a tractor over sails the verges. The erection of the fence would mean that vehicles would need to encroach onto the adjacent farmers field and crops. It has been suggested that the fence is moved 4m in from the boundary to allow sufficient space for farm vehicles to access the land.

Further concern has also been raised regarding public access to the farm track and the area of hardstanding to the front of the adjacent farm building. There are no measures in place that would stop these areas being used as overflow parking areas. It has been suggested that a gate be installed across the farm track access, close to the access into the playing fields.

These issues have been discussed with the applicants. It has been verbally agreed that a gated access at the farm track entrance will be installed to restrict access by the public. Furthermore a revised plan has been submitted showing the fence position to be 1m into the site.

## Recommendation

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following:

- 1 The development hereby approved shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which is designed to ensure that a planning permission does not continue in existence indefinitely if the development to which it relates is not carried out.

- 2 **No development shall commence until full details of both hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include:-**

- **proposed finished levels or contours;**
- **materials to be used for any hard surfacing including the parking area and footpaths;**
- **minor structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, signs, etc);**
- **proposed and existing functional services above and below ground level;**
- **planting plans, including schedule of size, species, positions, density and times of planting;**
- **cultivation details including operations required to establish new planting;**
- **details of existing trees and hedgerows on the site, indicating those to be retained and the method of their protection during development works.**

**The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

**Reason: In order to ensure that the landscaping is carried out within a reasonable period in the interest of the visual amenities of the area.**

- 3 All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years of completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority give written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the site and the area generally.

- 4 **No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved archaeological scheme**

**Reason: To record and advance understanding of the archaeological resource which will be unavoidably destroyed as a consequence of the development.**

- 5 **No development shall commence until details of all fencing to be erected, including height, design and materials together with details of any gates or openings, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The fencing shall be erected in accordance with the approved details. The perimeter fencing shall be provided prior to the use hereby permitting coming into effect.**

**Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development and in the interests of site security**

- 6 **No development shall take place until details of the height and location of the grass banking located along the eastern site boundary shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for written approval. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall be completed prior to the first use of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

**Reason: In the interests of neighbouring amenity.**

- 7 **No development shall take place until -**

**i) a detailed assessment of ground conditions of the land proposed for the new playing field land as shown on drawing number 101C shall be undertaken (including drainage and topography) to identify constraints which could affect playing field quality; and**

**ii) based on the results of this assessment to be carried out pursuant to i) above of this condition, a detailed scheme to ensure that the playing fields will be provided to an acceptable quality (including appropriate drainage where necessary) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England.**

**The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme within a timescale to be first approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England.**

**Reason: To ensure that site surveys are undertaken for new or replacement playing fields and that any ground condition constraints can be and are mitigated to ensure provision of an adequate quality playing field and to accord with Policy CS3.**

- 8 **No development shall commence until details of the junction of the modified vehicular access with the highway have been approved by the Local Planning Authority and the football pitches shall not be brought into use until the junction has been constructed in accordance with the approved details.**

**Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway and premises.**

- 9 The modified vehicular access shall have a minimum width of 7.3m, kerb radii of 9m, and shall be located in accordance with the approved Site layout Plan, drawing number 20192/101C.

Reason: In the interest of road safety and for the avoidance of doubt

- 10 Before the modified access is first brought into use, a triangular vision splay shall be provided on each side of the new access drive and shall be 2.8m measured along the back edge of the highway from the centre line of the anticipated vehicle path to a point 2.0m measured from the back edge of the footway/cycleway into the site along the centre line of the anticipated vehicle path. The vision splay so described and on land under the applicant's control shall be maintained free of any obstruction to visibility exceeding a height of 600mm above the adjoining footway/cycleway level.

Reason: To provide adequate visibility between the existing footway/cycleway and the modified access and to make the access safe and convenient for the traffic that is likely to use it.

- 12 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 101C, GA/EL 120 A.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

### **Reasons for Granting**

The proposed football pitches would not have a negative impact on the character of the area or an adverse impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and is acceptable in terms of highway safety. The proposal is also considered acceptable in terms of its impact on biodiversity and the landscape therefore by reason of its size, design and location, the proposal is in conformity with Policies CS3, CS14, DM3, DM4, DM14 and DM15 of the Core Strategy and Management Policies, November 2009; and The National Planning Policy Framework, 2012.

**Notes to Applicant**

1. The applicant is advised that no works associated with the construction of the vehicular access should be carried out within the confines of the public highway without prior consent, in writing, of the Central Bedfordshire Council. Upon receipt of this Notice of Planning Approval, the applicant is advised to write to Central Bedfordshire Council's Highway Help Desk, Technology House, 239 Ampthill Road, Bedford MK42 9BD quoting the Planning Application number and supplying a copy of the Decision Notice and a copy of the approved plan. This will enable the necessary consent and procedures under Section 184 of the Highways Act to be implemented. The applicant is also advised that if any of the works associated with the construction of the vehicular access affects or requires the removal and/or the relocation of any equipment, apparatus or structures (e.g. street name plates, bus stop signs or shelters, statutory authority equipment etc.) then the applicant will be required to bear the cost of such removal or alteration.

The applicant is advised that the requirements of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 will apply to any works undertaken within the limits of the existing public highway. Further details can be obtained from the Traffic Management Group Highways and Transport Division, Central Bedfordshire Council, Technology House, 239 Ampthill Road, Bedford MK42 9BD.

2. The applicant is advised that the proposed landscaping scheme required for the approval of condition 2 should be discussed with Tree and Landscape Officers to agree an acceptable scheme prior to the submission.

**DECISION**

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