
APPLICATION NO.	P08/E0440
APPLICATION TYPE	Full
REGISTERED	17 th April 2008
PARISH	Sonning Common
WARD MEMBER(S)	Alan Rooke and Paul Harrison
APPLICANT	Mrs S Abbott
SITE	Bishopswood Playing Fields, Horsepond Road, Sonning Common
PROPOSAL	Erection of a replacement sports pavilion and realignment of pitches.
AMENDMENTS	Noise survey, acoustic design specification, arboricultural survey and additional supporting evidence and amended plans.
GRID REFERENCE	469980/180764
OFFICER	Paul Lucas

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This application is reported to the Planning Committee at the request of Councillor Alan Rooke.

1.2 The application site is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix 1. The application site comprises Bishopswood Playing Fields, which was previously a significant facility for the local community with football and cricket pitches and a club house including a bar, toilets, changing facilities, 2 function rooms and kitchen. The site in total comprises 8.40Ha (21.58 acres) in a rural location within the Chilterns AONB, 400 metres from the western edge of the built up area of Sonning Common and 700 metres to the north-west of Gallowstree Common. The site was formally owned by the Council and leased to Sonning Common Parish Council. These provided a social facility for sports users and local community, both for formal and informal recreational use. The site was used by walkers, joggers, dog walkers and kite flyers. There was on-site car parking. However, the clubhouse fell into disrepair and had to be demolished. Prior to the applicant's purchase of the site the Council provided temporary changing facilities for football pitch users. These were maintained by the applicant until the close of the 07/08 football season when they were removed. Two ancillary buildings are located in the northern corner of the site; one is a prefabricated garage, the other a steel shed. These are used by the grounds staff for storage. The sports ground and tennis courts cover an area of 6.05Ha (15.55 acres) with 2.35Ha (6.03 acres) of adjacent woodland.

1.3 The site has vehicular access off Horsepond Road which is shared with the adjacent nursery school, and there is space for vehicles to park and turn within the site. There are also a number of public footpaths around the site offering unencumbered pedestrian access to the playing fields and adjacent woods. The site is open to the south and west and enclosed by mature deciduous woodland to the east and partly to the north. These woods form a substantial backdrop to the site. The site naturally divides into three parts; the narrowest part adjacent to the vehicular access has two hard surface tennis courts; the larger north-west part is relatively flat; the smaller south-east part has a gentle slope to the south. With the exception of the part adjacent to the vehicular access, the site is predominantly maintained as grass playing fields. The northern corner has become overgrown and the ground slabs of

earlier buildings have been left in-situ. Some ornamental trees remain from an earlier landscaping scheme in this area. Two telecoms masts stand against the woods on the north-eastern side. The only building in the near vicinity of the site is a relatively modern single storey, red brick school, now used as a private nursery. It is well used and attracts a regular number of parents and staff throughout each week day, almost exclusively travelling by private car.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a replacement sports pavilion and the realignment of pitches with associated alterations to the access and parking arrangements and additional landscaping. The building would be positioned about 100 metres further east than the former pavilion location and it would be constructed in two phases. Phase 1 would involve the provision of two changing rooms, officials changing rooms, male, female and disabled toilets, bar, café/restaurant, kitchen and associated office, stores and staffroom. There would be a terrace around the south-west side of the building facing the pitches. Phase 2 would introduce a climbing wall, aerobics studio, fitness studio, sauna/spa, two more changing rooms and toilets, secure refuse storage compound and a first floor balcony. The Phase 1 building would measure 34-41 metres long, 13 metres wide and would have a 7 metres high ridge. The Phase 2 section of the building would be 32 metres long and 12.5 metres wide and would have a 9.5 metres high ridge. The climbing tower would extend to 12.3 metres in height. The materials would consist of vertical larch and cedar weatherboarding and plain clay roof tiles with timber frames around glazing. The proposed parking layout would provide 36 car parking spaces, including 2 disabled bays and some bicycle stands. In Phase 1, the waste collection facilities would be in a metal shed close to the site of the former clubhouse. The pitch realignment would result in one full-size adult pitch, two junior pitches and two 5-a-side pitches.

2.2 The application originally proposed a manager's flat in the roof space in Phase 2, however this has been deleted from the application following Officers' concerns about there being insufficient justification for it. The volume of the building would remain the same and consequently the applicant could make a later application to convert the roofspace into a manager's flat if the operation of the pavilion demonstrated greater evidence of need for a manager to live on site.

2.3 The applications were accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, noise survey, acoustic design specification, arboricultural survey and additional supporting evidence. All of these can be viewed on the Council's website www.southoxon.gov.uk. The plans of the proposed development are **attached** as Appendix 2.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 **Sonning Common Parish Council** – No strong views, but concerned about the new site location and height of the proposed development near Old Copse Wood.

3.2 **Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council** – No strong views.

3.3 **OCC Highways** – No objection subject to conditions requiring maintenance of sightlines, details of access surfacing, provision of give way signage and retention of car and cycle parking as shown.

- 3.4 **Environmental Services (Environmental Health)** – Unlikely that noise from the facility would be a problem, due to the construction/layout of the building and the distance to the nearest residential accommodation. In addition, records show that Environmental Services have not received any complaints about noise arising from the previous pavilion, either from sports use or from functions involving amplified music. Most problems arise relatively close to a pub/club or along roads leading to/from the premises. In view of the distance from the pavilion, it is unlikely that there would be noise problems from groups of persons leaving which would affect residential accommodation. No objections subject to conditions to control external lighting and restrict hours of use to those set out in the application form.
- 3.5 **Countryside Officer** – No objection subject to a condition to require details of lighting to restrict spillage into adjacent woodland.
- 3.6 **Tree Officer** – No objection to amended plans which addressed earlier concerns about tree protection and landscaping, subject to a hard and soft landscaping condition.
- 3.7 **Environmental Services (Contamination)** – No objection subject to standard condition requiring investigation and remediation as necessary.
- 3.8 **Crime Prevention Design Officer** – No objection subject to condition detailing crime reduction measures that can be incorporated in the physical security of the premises.
- 3.9 **Sports Development Officer** – No comments on amended plans or supporting information.
- 3.10 **Waste Management** – Amended plans have addressed earlier concerns about waste collection during Phase 1.
- 3.11 **Monson** – No objection, subject to condition requiring details of survey of foul drainage sewer and surface water drainage.
- 3.12 **Sport England** – Support the proposals.
- 3.13 **Chilterns Conservation Board** – No comments.
- 3.14 **Sonning Common Society** – Objection: overly intensive and inappropriately sited. Only recognise the need for changing rooms and toilets.
- 3.15 **Woodland Trust** – Important that development does not impinge on woodland edge and recommended that bat surveys are undertaken.
- 3.16 **OCC Footpaths** – No objections, subject to standard informatives. Upgrading of footpath to bridleway or cycleway would require a modification order to be agreed.

3.17 **Neighbours** – 36 representations of objection to the original plans. 17 of these were re-iterated during the course of the consultation on the amended plans and details. 1 representation of comment/reservations.

- A restaurant and bar are inappropriate in a rural location
- Noise nuisance to local residents as a result of music and persons leaving site late at night
- Light pollution to local residents and disturbance to wildlife
- Three storey building would be an eyesore and excessive size
- Encourage car travel
- Should be built on less intrusive site of original pavilion
- Caretakers flat could be sold off setting precedent for future residential use (deleted from proposal)
- Loss of public access to whole site in favour of a business-based members-only sports club
- Insufficient on-site parking leading to increased traffic and on-street parking along Woodlands Road
- Concern about what happens to buildings and site if the venture fails in the future
- Concern about improvements urbanising of existing footpath through woods (deleted from proposal)
- Facilities threaten viability of other drinking and eating establishments and fitness activities in locality

17 representations of support:

- Much needed facility within walking and cycling distance
- Encouraged that applicant is a Sonning Common resident
- Better mixture of activities, especially for young people
- Children can reach playing fields without having to cross access through site
- Pavilion would face south-westwards, away from the village
- Pitches and general site maintenance have improved since applicant taken over site
- Would create some jobs and may be opportunities for young people to do sports coaching or NVQ in ground keeping
- Opportunity to establish connections with local schools

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 The most relevant applications are:

4.2 P78/S0392 – Planning permission was granted for the conversion of a timber building into a sports pavilion in August 1978.

4.3 P82/S0634 – Planning permission was granted for extensions to the sports pavilion in January 1983.

4.4 P05/E0655/DC – Planning permission was granted for temporary siting of portable toilet and changing units.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Policies:

G1 – General Restraint and Sustainable Development

G2 – Protection and Enhancement of the Environment

G3 – Locational Strategy

G4 – Development in the Countryside and on the Edge of Settlements
G6 – Promoting Good Design
C1 – Landscape Character
C2 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
C6 – Biodiversity Conservation
C8 – Species Protection
C9 – Landscape Features
EP2 – Noise and Vibrations
EP3 – Lighting
EP6 – Surface Water Protection
EP7 – Groundwater Protection
EP8 – Contamination
D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness
D2 – Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
D6 – Design Against Crime
D7 – Access for All
D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
D10 – Waste Management
R1 – Formal Recreation
R3 – Indoor Sports Facilities
R4 – Recreation in the Countryside
R8 – Public Rights of Way
CF2 – Provision of Community Facilities and Services
T1 – Transport Requirements for New Developments
T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

5.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance:
South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 – Sections 3, 4 & 5.
Chilterns Buildings Design Guide – Chapter 3.
South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment – Character Area 10.

5.3 Government Guidance:
PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13 – Transport
PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
PPS23 – Planning and Pollution Control
PPG24 – Planning and Noise

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Under Policy R4, proposals for outdoor sport in the countryside will be permitted, subject to certain criteria. Policy R3 explains that where there is a demand for indoor facilities to meet the needs of the residents of the area, these will normally be permitted within existing settlements and subject to similar criteria set out under Policy R4. The main planning issues are therefore whether the proposed development would:

- Be acceptable in principle;
- Be fit for purpose and in keeping with the locality and would not detract from the rural character and landscape of the Chilterns AONB;
- Adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents or other users of the countryside through noise and traffic generation;
- Any other material planning considerations.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 It is recognised that the proposal would not strictly accord with the provisions of Policy R3, because the site is not located within a settlement. However, it is nonetheless located very close to the edge of Sonning Common, which is classified as one of the larger villages in the District. The additional information submitted with the application has demonstrated to Officers that there is a need for improved outdoor and indoor recreation in Sonning Common and surrounding settlements, which has been backed up by some of the representations of support. The condition of the outdoor pitches had been in decline and the applicant has undertaken work, which has improved them. It is clear that the outdoor facilities would benefit from having a pavilion to provide changing rooms and toilets and an area to congregate indoors in bad weather. As proved to be the case with the previous facility, the revenue generated by such uses is insufficient to enable it to be maintained in the long-run. The revenue to support the proposed outdoor sport facilities would be provided through the introduction of a bar/café/restaurant facility in Phase 1, followed by a facility for several indoor sporting activities in Phase 2. These would generate sufficient revenue to enable outdoor facilities to be maintained at an appropriate standard. Both the Council's Sport Development Officer and Sport England have supported the application. PPG17 suggests a sequential approach should be made to indoor sport provision. The most favoured locations are middle of settlements, followed by edge of settlements. There are no other locations currently available within the settlement, which could provide the same level of opportunities for outdoor and indoor sport in an integrated manner.
- 6.3 Although it is inevitable that the facility would attract people from surrounding parts of the District, this has to be balanced against the fact that many residents already have to travel to other settlements in order to access similar facilities to those proposed in the application. Consequently, it is likely that given the identified local need, the majority of users would come from Sonning Common. The applicant entered into a covenant with the Council, when the land was purchased, which contains a clause preventing the property from being used for any purpose other than sports and recreation and associated uses and a clause requiring the applicant to allow members of the public continued access to the property, which would prevent it from becoming an exclusive private enterprise, without any community interaction. On the basis of the above assessment, whilst outside the built up area of the village, the site is considered to be an appropriate location for a facility of this scale in accordance with the spirit of Policies R3 and R4.

Landscape Character

- 6.4 Policy C2 seeks to safeguard the natural beauty and landscape quality of AONBs. Policies G6 and D1 are concerned with the promotion of good design. Policy D2 sets out that parking should be provided in a safe, discreet and sensitive matter. The previous pavilion had a floor area of about 520 square metres and was 6 metres high with a terrace of some 95 square metres. The total proposed facility would have a floorspace of approximately 740 square metres. Phase 1 would provide about half of this space and would have a 7 metre high ridge. Phase 2 would have a higher ridge at 9.5 metres high and a 12.4 metre high climbing wall. The proposed terrace would be 155 square metres. The overall scale of the facility would be larger, but only once Phase 2 is completed. The previous structure was created initially from the conversion of a timber building and subsequently extended. This would be a purpose-built structure designed from appropriately vernacular materials and yet incorporating glazing to make maximum use of passive heating and ventilation.

- 6.5 The building would be seen in public views from the nearby roads and footpaths against the backdrop of the surrounding extensive woodland forming Old Copse or glimpsed through the woodland itself. There would be no views of the development in the wider landscape. The parking area would be mainly contained between the building and the woodland. The Tree Officer is satisfied that the proposal would not harm established trees and additional landscaping is proposed to help assimilate the development into its surroundings. In the light of the above assessment, the proposed development would not be unduly prominent in the AONB landscape and would be in accordance with the above Policies.

Living Conditions of Local Residents

- 6.6 Policies EP2 and EP3 seek to control noise and light nuisance. Policy T2 seeks to ensure that an appropriate amount of off-street parking is provided in new developments. Nearby residents on Woodlands Road, Orchard Avenue and Lambourne Road in particular have raised concerns about potential noise nuisance. However, as can be seen from paragraph 3.4 above, the Environmental Health Officer does not consider that noise nuisance will occur due the distances involved and the acoustic measures that would be in place in order to help contain sound within the building. It should be noted that whilst the former pavilion was further away, its main elevation faced south-eastwards, towards Sonning Common and because it was a converted wooden building, would have achieved little attenuation of noise. Notwithstanding, no complaints were received by Environmental Health about the previous facility and noise abatement powers are available to the Council to control any future noise nuisance that may occur. It is recommended that a planning condition is imposed to restrict the hours of operation to those contained within the application. Light spillage could be controlled through an appropriate planning condition. Residents on Woodlands Road are also concerned about overspill parking on-street in front of their properties. The Local Highway Authority has confirmed that the level of off-street parking provided is appropriate and as such no objections have been raised. On this basis, the proposed development would be in accordance with the above Policies.

Other Material Planning Considerations

- 6.7 The Local Highway Authority is satisfied with the visibility at the junction of the access with Horsepond Road, subject to planning conditions requiring maintenance of visibility splays and give-way signage and as such, the proposal would not pose a risk to highway or pedestrian safety. The Crime Prevention Design Officer is satisfied that the building could incorporate secure by design standards and confirmation of this could be sought via a planning condition. The amended supporting documents include a potential BREEAM assessment, which lists several areas where sustainable measures are likely to be incorporated into the design. A full assessment could be required to be submitted through a planning condition. Any remaining biodiversity concerns could be addressed through a planning condition to provide details of lighting. The waste management arrangements shown on the amended plans, could be secured with a planning condition. Matters relating to drainage and contamination could also be covered by standard conditions and informatives. The Rights of Way Officers is satisfied that the surrounding public footpaths would not be affected by the proposed development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The planning application proposal would comply with the relevant Development Plan Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Government Guidance and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the planning application for the proposed development would be acceptable in principle, would preserve the natural beauty and landscape quality of the AONB, would not pose a risk to highway safety and trip generation and would not materially harm the living conditions of nearby residents.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Grant Planning Permission

Subject to the following conditions:

1. **Standard 3 year time limit**
2. **Details of levels against fixed datum point**
3. **Samples of materials for walls and roofs prior to commencement**
4. **Details of crime reduction measures as agreed with CPDO prior to commencement**
5. **Details of sustainable measures prior to first use**
6. **Waste management implemented as shown on approved plans**
7. **Visibility splays and give way signage at junction to be installed prior to first use and thereafter maintained as approved**
8. **Car and cycle parking as plan and thereafter retained as such**
9. **Hard and soft landscaping scheme including car parking surfacing prior to commencement**
10. **Building and car parking to be occupied/used only for purposes incidental to the indoor and outdoor sporting activities listed in the application**
11. **Hours of use to be as specified on the application forms, namely:
Restaurant/Café - 8:00am to 11:30pm Mon-Sat; and 8:00am to 10:30pm
Sundays & Bank Holidays
Bar - 12:00pm to 11:30pm Mon-Fri; 11:00am to 11:30pm Sat; and 11:00am to 10:30pm
Sundays & Bank Holidays
Leisure – 7:00am to 8:00pm Mon-Sun & Bank Holidays**
12. **Details of contamination investigation and remediation as necessary**
13. **Details of lighting scheme prior to commencement**
14. **Details of survey of foul sewer prior to commencement**
15. **Details of surface water drainage prior to commencement**

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