

APPLICATION NO.	P14/S0748/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	15.4.2014
PARISH	WOODCOTE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Mr Christopher Quinton
APPLICANT	Langtree School
SITE	Langtree Secondary School Reading Road Woodcote, RG8 0RA
PROPOSAL	Erection of a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) with fencing and floodlights.
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	464697/181893
OFFICER	Ms V Butterworth

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application is referred to committee because the officer's recommendation conflicts with the view of Woodcote Parish Council.

1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) is an area sited on the west side of Langtree Secondary School's sports field, which is located within the village of Woodcote. The site falls within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

1.3 The field is surrounded by residential properties to the south and east, and school buildings to the north. Woodcote Recreation Ground and Woodcote Primary School lie to the west of the sports field. The closest residential property to the site lies approximately 40 metres to the south.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks planning permission for the provision of a Multi Use Games Area and six floodlighting columns. The Multi Use Games Area would have an area of 61 metres by 43 metres and it would have a short pile, sand dressed surface. The fencing surrounding the pitch would be green plastic-coated sports rebound fencing that would be 3 metres in height on the sides of the pitch, and 5 metres in height at the goal ends of the pitch. Two macadam paths would link the games area to the school buildings.

2.2 The six floodlighting columns would be 10 metres tall carrying a total of eight 2kw luminaires; two lamps on the middle columns and one each on the corner columns. A 3 metre high, and 5 metre wide, earth bund with planting on top is also proposed to the south of the games area to act as a noise absorber and to partially screen the pitch from view.

2.3 Copies of the proposed plans are **attached** as Appendix B. The application is accompanied by a design and access statement and a justification statement, which can be viewed online at www.southoxon.gov.uk.

2.4 The pitch would be approximately a quarter of full size and would allow adult football and hockey of up to seven a side. It is the applicant's intention for the Multi Use Games Area to be used by school pupils, in particular to facilitate sports lessons during the winter, and also for it to be hired out commercially to clubs and community groups

outside of school hours.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Woodcote Parish Council – Object to the use of the pitch on a Sunday.
- 3.2 Countryside Officer (South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse) - No strong views: Submission of floodlighting details required to mitigate impact on bats.
- 3.3 Health & Housing - Env. Protection Team – Object to the use of the pitch on a Sunday.
- 3.4 CPRE Henley & Mapledurham District – Object: floodlighting will be obtrusive and harmful to rural village.
- 3.5 Neighbour and other representations – Ten objections received: use of the facility outside of school hours, noise levels of balls hitting fence and people shouting, light spill/intrusion, impact on wildlife, loss of privacy, blot on landscape, light pollution, visual intrusion of high fencing on landscape, increased traffic.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 [P12/S1561/FUL](#) - Approved (10/10/2012)
Change of use of caretakers bungalow to offices.

- [P06/E1249](#) - Other Outcome (08/03/2007)
Astroturf & 3M fenced facility with 10M floodlighting.

- [P54/H0188](#) - Approved (05/01/1955)
Use of piece of land as an additional playing field.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

- 5.1 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance
- 5.2 **South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) 2027**
 - CSS1 - The Overall Strategy
 - CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
 - CSQ3 - Design
 - CSEN1 - Landscape protection
- 5.3 **South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011 saved policies**
 - G2 - Protect district from adverse development
 - D1 - Principles of good design
 - C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
 - EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration
 - EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
 - R1 - Outdoor sport or play areas
- 5.4 **Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan**
- 5.5 **South Oxfordshire Design Guide (SODG) 2008**
Section 3

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The main issues to be considered are:
 - 1. The principle of the proposed development
 - 2. The impact on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding

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- area, including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
3. The impact on neighbouring properties
 4. The impact on bats
 5. Highway considerations

Principle of development

- 6.2 The principle of providing a Multi Use Games Area on the site is considered acceptable having regard to the existing use of the site as sports field and Policy R1 of the SOLP, which allows for new or improved facilities for outdoor sport to serve local needs provided there are no overriding amenity, environmental, Green Belt, transport or agricultural objections.

Impact on character

- 6.3 The surface of the proposed Multi Use Games Area would have a limited visual impact on the character of the site and its surrounding area. The proposed fencing and lighting columns, due to their height, would be visible from neighbouring properties and the public footpath that runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the application site. However, officers consider that the height of the proposed floodlight columns is acceptable. It is considered that the physical elements of the proposed development would not be out of keeping with the site and its surroundings, and it would not harm the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, because the site is located within the built-up area of Woodcote and is surrounded on three sides by buildings.

- 6.4 The applicant has stated that the level of luminance is considered to be a minimum but appropriate level for the standard required to play hockey safely but would also comply with the guidelines set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers for “intrinsically dark areas” such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- 6.5 During hours of darkness the floodlights would be visible from the surrounding area but the site falls within a built-up part of the village and officers therefore consider that the floodlights would be acceptable in this context. The proposed lights would not be out of keeping with the character of the area because street lighting, and lights on and within surrounding buildings, are present in the vicinity of the site. The use of cowls, shields and hoods on the floodlights would limit their impact and a planning condition can be attached to the consent to this effect.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers: Hours of use

- 6.6 The applicant’s proposed hours of use of the Multi Use Games Area were:
- 09:00-21:30 Monday to Friday
 - 09:00-18:00 Saturday
 - 09:00-17:00 Sunday and Bank Holidays
- 6.7 The Environmental Protection Team suggested a planning condition to restrict the hours of operation to reduce disturbance caused to local residents. These hours of use would be supported by Woodcote Parish Council:
- 09:00-20:30 Monday to Friday
 - 09:00-18:00 Saturday
 - No use Sundays or Bank holidays
- 6.8 Planning officers agree that the hours of use in the evening should be restricted to 20:30. The applicant has also agreed to this restriction. However, given the current lack of restriction on the use of the sports field it does not seem reasonable, in planning terms, to prevent the use of the Multi Use Games Area on a Sunday. Officers therefore suggest that a condition is attached to the consent that restricts the hours of use of the

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Multi Use Games Area to:

- 09:00-20:30 Monday to Friday
- 09:00-18:00 Saturday
- 09:00-17:00 Sundays or Bank holidays

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers: Noise

- 6.9 Concerns have been raised about the potential for an increase in noise generated by the development from the impact of balls hitting the fence and shouting of those using the games area.
- 6.10 Weight must be given to the fact that the site is already used for playing sports and although it is not often used in the evenings and weekends there are currently no restrictions on its hours or days of use. The school could use or hire out the sports field at any time.
- 6.11 Officers acknowledge that there is likely to be an intensification in the use of the site and also an increase in noise as a result of the change in surface and balls hitting the fence. However, it is considered that the level of additional noise resulting from the proposed development is unlikely to result in significant harm to the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. The increased level of noise is not considered sufficient to warrant refusal of the application and the proposed bund and planting will assist in mitigating noise to some extent. The hours of use recommended by planning officers would also limit noise disturbance.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers: Light spill

- 6.12 Objections to the floodlighting have been raised in relation to their height, impact of light spill and hours of use on local residents.
- 6.13 The applicant has submitted information stating that the 10 metre high columns are the optimum height for a games pitch of the proposed size. The height enables light to be directed downwards thereby limiting light spill but giving an even spread of light. Shorter columns would require lights to be angled which would result in a greater amount of light spill.
- 6.14 The lighting assessment submitted with the application identifies that the level of light resulting from the floodlights is well within guideline limits at the site boundary. The Environmental Protection Officer therefore considers that the proposed level of lighting to be acceptable.
- 6.15 The proposed bund and planting will further assist with reducing light intrusion onto neighbouring properties. The restriction on the hours of use of the Multi Use Games Area will also be applied to the hours of use of the floodlights.

Impact on bats

- 6.16 The Countryside Officer has assessed information submitted by the applicant and other interested parties. Evidence suggests that bats use the hedgerow to the west of the proposed Multi Use Games Area as a commuting route and also for foraging.
- 6.17 The Countryside Officer has advised that the habitats on the site are not particularly favourable for bats due to the site's maintained nature and there are plenty of similar habitats in the vicinity which would not be impacted by the proposed floodlighting.
- 6.18 For the vast majority of the year there would be no impacts on any bats using the area irrespective of the size of the bat population or the species of bat concerned. Even if there was a roost close to the site it is unlikely that any species of bats would be using

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the area before the lights are switched off, if they are switched off at 20:30. The sunset times close-in in mid-September during a time when bats are becoming less active. Throughout the majority of the winter months there would be no impacts on bats as a result of lighting because bats are either in hibernation or very inactive.

- 6.19 There may be short periods during the early spring and autumn when the lights would be in operation during the periods where bats are still active, however, this would only be for a very short period at emergence and the majority of the night would remain dark.
- 6.20 Provided the timing of the lighting is restricted by condition to be shut off at 8.30pm, the impacts on the local bat population would be minimal. In addition, the Countryside Officer recommends that it may be possible to reduce the backward spill of the lighting onto the hedgerow by the use of appropriate hoods, cowls and shields.

Highway considerations

- 6.21 The main use of the Multi Use Games Area will be by pupils of the school during school hours so it would not generate additional parking demand or traffic. Outside of school hours, there would be available parking spaces within the school site to accommodate the parking demand generated if the Multi Use Games Area was hired out.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposal complies with the relevant Development Plan Policies and, subject to the attached conditions, would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the site or the surrounding area, and would not be unneighbourly or harmful to wildlife.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **Planning Permission**

1 : Commencement 3 yrs - Full Planning Permission

2 : Approved plans

3 : Wildlife Protection

4 : Hours of use restriction

5 : Floodlights Hours of Use restriction

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