

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLANNING, PUBLIC PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2017/1424/FULL
Location: Queenswood School Shepherds Way Brookmans Park Hatfield
 AL9 6NS
Proposal: Construction of two all weather netball courts
Officer: Mr R Adenegan

Recommendation: Granted

6/2017/1424/FULL

Context	
Site and Application description	<p>The application site is part of large wooded grounds around the private school complex of Queenswood School. The site is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt and all the trees and woodland areas protected by Tree Preservation Order (No.3).</p> <p>The school site is situated to the south of Shepherds Way, which forms the northern boundary. The site is well screened by mature trees along the northern boundary. It is positioned approximately 125m AOD, from where the surrounding land gently falls away both to the southwest and the east. As such, there are no clear views into the site from surrounding public routes.</p> <p>To the south and east, the boundary is with Leggatts Wood and Leggatts Park. This is a private estate, containing a number of mansion houses.</p> <p>To the west, the school site adjoins open countryside. Views towards the school can be had along Great North Road, however, the school buildings are well screened by the mature trees within and around the site.</p> <p>The site includes a range of facilities, including boarding houses, general and specialist classrooms, a theatre, a library, a chapel, a swimming pool, hockey courts, tennis courts, a sports pavilion, a gym and a medical centre.</p> <p>The proposed site lies between existing hard surfaces tennis courts to the west, staff accommodation in 'Chapel Close' and areas of external grounds storage to the east and glass houses/groundsman's outbuildings to the north. To the south is further open space.</p> <p>The proposal involves the construction of two all-weather netball courts. The new netball courts are to be installed on an area of amenity grassland in the middle of the School site close to existing sports area and is currently used for growing of vegetables by students and staff members. The proposal involves the laying of a hard surface of 34.50m x 36.5m. The surface will be marked out with two netball courts of 30.5m x 15.26m with surrounding run-offs. Two tennis courts will also be marked out. No fencing or floodlighting is proposed. No above ground structures are proposed with the exception of removable netball hoops.</p>

Constraints (as defined within WHDP 2005)	GB - Greenbelt - Distance: 0 LCA - Landscape Character Area (Northaw Common Parkland) - Distance: 0 PAR - PARISH (NORTH MYMMS) - Distance: 0 Wards - Brookmans Park & Little Heath - Distance: 0 HEN - No known habitats present (high priority for habitat creation) - Distance: 0		
Relevant planning history	Planning Application Number: E6/1962/0800/ Decision: Granted Decision Date: 16 May 1962 Proposal: Kitchen Application Number: E6/1963/0475/ Decision: Granted Decision Date: 09 April 1963 Proposal: Resiting of store building. Application Number: E6/1963/0476/ Decision: Granted Decision Date: 09 April 1963 Proposal: New classroom. Application Number: E6/1963/0682/ Decision: Granted Decision Date: 15 May 1963 Proposal: Alteration to dining hall roof. Application Number: E6/1965/2462/ Decision: Withdrawn Decision Date: 31 December 1965 Proposal: Covered yard and parlour barns. Application Number: E6/1968/0328/ Decision: Granted Decision Date: 14 March 1968 Proposal: Erection of new milking parlour and covered feeding. Application Number: S6/1988/0921/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 22 November 1988 Proposal: Erection of new educational building Application Number: S6/1989/0219/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 26 May 1989 Proposal: Erection of temporary classroom Application Number: S6/1989/0454/FP Decision: Refused Decision Date: 08 December 1989 Proposal: Erection of seven 4 bedroom houses with garages and eight 2 bedroom flats with garages for staff accommodation		
Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support: 0	Object: 0	Other: 0
Publicity	49 neighbouring occupiers and properties were consulted by way of letter. No response has been received.		
Summary of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 		

neighbour responses	
Consultees and responses	<p>1. North Mymms Parish Council - This proposal is within a Green Belt location and due to the loss of grass and previously cultivated vegetable patches, that soft landscaping to enhance the surrounding environment should be recommended.</p> <p>2. Councillor Stephen Boulton - No response</p> <p>3. Councillor John Dean - No response</p> <p>4. Councillor Jonathan Boulton - No response</p> <p>5. WHBC - Public Health and Protection No objection</p> <p>6. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - Landscapes Department No soft landscaping or arboricultural comments.</p> <p>7. Hertfordshire County Council – No response</p>
Relevant Policies	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NPPF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GBSP1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GBSP2 <input type="checkbox"/> M14 Others	
Main Issues	
Is the development within a conservation area?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Would the significance of the designated heritage asset be conserved or enhanced?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Comment (if applicable): N/A	
Would the development reflect the character of the area?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Comment (if applicable):	
<p>Chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which notes that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.</p> <p>In the supporting document, the applicants make this statement - it will be commencing <i>“construction of its new indoor sports hall. This will involve the loss of indoor courts for a temporary period whilst construction takes place. This will leave the School with a deficit in courts; this will be addressed by these new outdoor courts. The school currently does not have any outdoor netball courts and so this proposal will be a significant enhancement to the school’s sports facilities. Subsequent to the construction of the new sports hall, these new courts will in any event be retained in order to improve the sports facilities of the School and make good use of an area of under-utilised land.”</i></p> <p>The proposed site of the courts is presently not used for any sporting purposes. It lies between existing hard surfaces tennis courts to the west, staff accommodation in ‘Chapel Close’ and areas of external grounds storage to the east and glass houses/groundsman’s outbuildings to the north. To the south is further open space.</p> <p>New buildings are generally inappropriate, but subject to a number of exceptions set out in para 89 of the NPPF, including the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. If it can be demonstrated that the proposals would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, (having regard to the previously developed nature</p>	

of the school land) and would not further conflict with the purposes of including land within it, the scheme would comply with the second bullet point in NPPF para 89 and would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there would be no need to establish whether very special circumstances arise.

However, if the proposal is considered to have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, then the proposal would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and there would be a need to establish whether very special circumstances arise. In that case, a convincing argument would need to be made for this in terms of "very special circumstances", relating to the benefit netball courts and impact on its Green Belt setting.

In regards to above, the proposed netball courts clearly fall into the category of exceptions as set out in paragraph 89 and therefore do not conflict with Green Belt policy. They will not adversely impact on the openness as no above ground structures are proposed. They are also completely screened for any visual receptors outside of the School.

As such, the proposal accords with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Green Belt Policy of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Would the development reflect the character of the dwelling?

Yes No N/A

Comment (if applicable):

Would the development maintain the amenity of adjoining occupiers? (e.g. privacy, outlook, light etc.)

Yes No N/A

Comment (if applicable):

Would the development provide / retain sufficient parking?

Yes No N/A

Comment (if applicable):

Any other issues

The courts will be formed by a permeable macadam base course and surfacing course. A 20mm nominal size open-graded macadam will be imported and laid to a consolidated depth of 40mm. This will act as a sturdy base for the application of the surface course to follow. This course will be rolled and cross rolled to ensure a close knit finish, whilst maintaining the natural voids within the macadam to allow suitable drainage from the above surface course. This structure will allow natural filtration of water with run-off rates unchanged, avoiding the need for any engineered drainage solution.

The site proposed is amenity grassland and has no ecological value. The proposal will cause no changes to the overall drainage regime and therefore will have no impact on the risk of surface water flooding. The proposal is to address current School needs and will have no impact on pupil numbers or external use of the School site; as such there will be no impact on traffic associated with the School. No other potential impacts have been identified.

There is no adverse landscaping and arboricultural impact arising from the proposal.

Conclusion

The proposed development will preserve the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it and will have no on-site or off-site impacts. Accordingly, the proposal accords with relevant local and national policies. A grant of planning permission is recommended.

Conditions:

1. The sports court hereby permitted shall be only for the school's use and shall not be made available for wider community use without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To enable the Local Planning Authority to exercise control over development on the site in the interest of the amenity of nearby residents. To comply Policies D2 and R19 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

DRAWING NUMBERS

2. The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
082	A	Block Plan	30 June 2017
083		Location Plan	30 June 2017
081		Application Plan	30 June 2017
080		1:1000 Location Plan	30 June 2017

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

1. **POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT**

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).

Determined By:

Mrs L Hughes
23 August 2017