

Committee date	Tuesday, 26 July 2022
Application reference Site address	22/00583/FUL - Everett Rovers FC Dodd Road WD24 5FS
Proposal	Creation of a Community 3G Football Turf Pitch FTP 8380 sq. metres with associated features (see details)
Applicant	Mr Wayne Frost
Agent	Mr Tom Betts
Type of Application	Full Planning Application
Reason for committee Item	Number of objections
Target decision date	27/07/22
Statutory publicity	Site Notice
Case officer	Sam Oguz, sam.oguz@watford.gov.uk
Ward	Leggatts

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That planning permission be granted subject to conditions, as set out in section 8 of this report.

2. Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises Everett Rovers FC, a well-established football club within the Leggatts Ward. The site is 4.0 hectares, which includes multi-sized football pitches, clubhouse and associated parking. The main access to the site is from North Western Avenue and cars enter whilst travelling northbound, with Dodd Road servicing the club. To the east of the site is Cherry Tree Primary School, to the south is Harebreaks Wood and to the west is the development which comprises of housing on the former West Herts College site. This development comprises a mix of housing types. The site has 60 parking spaces available for use by its members and has no floodlight provision.
- 2.2 The site is not in a conservation area nor does it affect the setting of a listed building.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

- 3.2 The main part of this proposal is for the erection of a 3G football pitch within the existing playing field. The new facility will be a full size pitch available for both matches and training. It will be contained by a 4.5m high steel mesh fence measuring 106m x 77m. The pitch will be located parallel to the boundary fence with Cherry Tree School. The pitch will be floodlit with 6x 15m floodlight columns. A storage container will be used to store equipment overnight, this will be located within the fenced area.
- 3.3 In addition to the pitch, there will also be the inclusion of 4x 8m floodlights for the club's parking facility and a further 2x 5m lights adjacent to the club house. The proposal also includes a footpath connecting the pitch to the road and existing clubhouse.

3.4 Conclusion

The proposed works are deemed to result in a significant enhancement to the current facilities on site. Although the hours of use of the site are to be increased, the parking available on site is deemed to be sufficient to meet the intended demand of the site. Whilst nearby residents have objected due to potential noise and light pollution, no objection has been raised by technical consultees. To control this aspect, strict conditions are recommended.

4. Relevant policies

- 4.1 Members should refer to the background papers attached to the agenda. These highlight the policy framework under which this application is determined. Specific policy considerations with regard to this particular application are detailed in section 6 below.

5. Relevant site history/background information

- 5.1 The football club has been present on this site for a number of decades and does contribute to the surrounding community in a positive manner. The clubhouse and changing rooms were recently constructed (under ref. 15/01685/FUL) and have brought the site up to modern standards.
- 5.2 Previously, the site was adjacent to the Bill Everett Centre, a community sports centre. Within this past decade this has been demolished and the site is currently still vacant. The new properties on Dodd Road are the closest residential neighbours to the proposal.

6. Main considerations

- 6.1 The main issues to be considered in the determination of these applications are:
- (a) Principle of development
 - (b) Scale, design and impact on the character and appearance of the area
 - (c) Impact on neighbour amenity
 - (d) Traffic, highways and parking impacts.
 - (e) Public benefit
- 6.2 (a) Principle of the development
The current use of the site is as an established outdoor sports facility (Use Class F.2), this will remain unchanged as a result of this proposal. The addition of a 3G pitch represents an enhancement of the existing facilities on site. The space is underutilised for training and an enhancement to community and sporting facilities is welcome in both local and national planning policy.
- 6.3 It is considered that that the principle of the proposed 3G pitch and associated works on this site is acceptable.
- 6.4 (b) Scale, design and impact on the character and appearance of the area
The proposed 3G pitch will be 106m x 77m with a 4.5m tall steel fence. These dimensions are considered as appropriate for the intended use and align with the Sport England sizes for football pitches. In addition the site would be comparable to other pitches in the Watford area. The positioning of the pitch next to Cherry Tree School will mean it is as far away as possible from residential dwellings on Dodd Road and will have a lessened impact on the playing field. The location also means the view from the A41 is partially obscured due to the

siting of the clubhouse which will screen most of the pitch from view. Given the size, siting and location within an outdoor sports facility, the proposal would have no significant impact on the streetscene and is acceptable in terms of scale and design.

6.5 The proposed lights to the parking area and clubhouse are deemed to have no significant impact on the character and appearance of the area.

6.6 (c) Impact on neighbour amenity

Despite several neighbour objections against this application, the 3G pitch is set back far enough from the nearest properties that it would not give rise to any direct impacts. Despite neighbour objections mentioning both noise and lighting as an issue, Environmental Health have examined the submitted information and raised no objection on these grounds. Whilst there is likely to be an increase in the use of the site, particularly during the winter months, this has been addressed in the design and access statement and it is recommended that a condition is applied to restrict the hours of use from 8am – 10:10pm. This will limit any noise and light disturbance on adjoining neighbours. A noise impact assessment has also been carried out and it is noted that while the noise to surrounding area may change in the types of noises heard, they would not impact upon the general amenity of residents. The nearest noise sensitive location is predicted to receive a maximum noise level of 46 dB, this is below the 50dB threshold of the WHO and below the current average noise of the surrounding area. It is also noted that regardless of this proposal the neighbours will experience similar impacts as are present at the moment as the proposed pitch does not represent an increased capacity of the site, just an increase in time occupied.

6.7 Given the above assessment, it is considered that the new pitch and associated works are unlikely to result in a significant level of increased impact to neighbours. The applicant has demonstrated that impacts will aim to be reduced by implementation of a site management plan and controls on the time of use on the site.

6.8 (d) Traffic, highways and parking impacts.

The proposed changes to the site will have no impact on the highway or parking provision. The changes will increase the operational times on the site, however, information submitted would suggest the pitch would hold a maximum of 60 people in a midweek period. With a private car park capacity of 60 cars and 2 minibuses, it would be expected that the parking provision on-site could accommodate the additional operational hours. In addition to this, a 5 year Active Travel Plan has been supplied, aiming to reduce car journeys to the site by at least 20%. Despite neighbour concerns, it is likely that any increase in car activity on site can be accommodated by the private parking provision, particularly when the pitch will be in main use for midweek training.

6.9 (e) Public benefit

It must also be acknowledged that the proposal is likely to result in a high level of public benefit. Having a 3G pitch enables training and play in a variety of weather conditions and times of the year, something the club has to currently outsource. Additionally, sport is linked heavily to increased health and wellbeing and any proposal to enhance a sporting facility must have significant negative impacts to warrant a refusal of the application. In terms of this proposal, the benefits of the proposal outweigh the potential harm.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Sport England:

Sport England raises no objection to this application as a statutory consultee which is considered to meet exception 5 of their adopted Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 99 of the NPPF subject to a planning condition being imposed relating to the following matter as set out in this response:

- Artificial Grass Pitch Certification;

The principle of the proposal is also supported as a non-statutory consultee and advisory comments are made on technical issues such as hours of use and sports lighting.

7.2 Internal Consultees

Environmental Health:

The lighting and noise assessments are satisfactory. I would suggest you post condition the noise assessment recommendations re a noise action plan, for monitoring and controlling behaviour and use of the facility, with a clear complaints process, to resolve any future issues arising. In terms of lighting, you could post condition the lighting meets the engineers levels set out in their report, which appears to be below 5 Lux provided in the contour plans.

7.3 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 64 properties in the surrounding area. 389 representations have been made in response. Of these, 374 were in support, 10 objections and 5 general representations.

The main comments are summarised below, the full letters are available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Parking Issues	Addressed in Section 6.9 of the report. It is also noted that the situation is unlikely to change on matchdays (weekends) whether the 3G pitch is provided or not
Rubbish on site	The proposal will not affect the waste on site, the proposal does include 3 waste bins within the pitch boundary and these would be sufficient for the use of the pitch.
Social Activity/ Drinking on site	The clubhouse and its activities will not be effected by this proposal.
Noise and Light issues	No objection made by EH and relevant conditions will be implemented
Visual Amenity of the pitch	See section 6.4 of the report
Traffic and Congestion in the area	Whilst it is acknowledged that there are significant issues in terms of parking and traffic congestion, the applicant has demonstrated that the pitch will not increase the capacity of the site and has provided a detailed breakdown of numbers expected which aligns with the parking provision on-site. In addition to this the Active Travel Plan and Car sharing examples will aim to reduce traffic to the site. Also creating a more sustainable environment.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The following drawings are hereby approved:

- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0002.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0003.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0004.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0005.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0006.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0007.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0008.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0009.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0010.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0011.01
- Drawing Number: S21-331 DWG 0012.01
- Design and Access Statement: S21-331

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and the interests of proper planning.

3. Use of the artificial grass pitch shall not commence until:
 - (a) Certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met the FIFA Quality accreditation or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (fA TS); and
 - (b) Confirmation that the facility has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches;have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose, sustainable and provides sporting benefits.

4. The artificial lighting units shall not be operated until they are installed in accordance with the approved drawings and the lighting report by Phillips Lighting B.V. (Ref. HLS3337 dated 12 April 2022). The lights shall only be operational between the times of 08:00 – 22:10 Monday to Friday and 08:00 – 18:10 on weekends.

Reason: To ensure the operation of the artificial lights does not give rise to disturbance or nuisance to surrounding residential occupiers.

Informatives

1. The applicant is advised that the pitch should be tested every three years by an accredited testing laboratory in order to achieve and maintain FIFA Quality accreditation.