

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0470
Valid 19/07/2021

ENDON CRICKET CLUB
POST LANE
ENDON

LAY NEW PERMANABLE
HARDSTANDING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether the proposal comprises an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- Impact on neighbouring amenity.
- Impact on highway safety.
- Impact on existing sport provision.
- Impact on existing trees.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site comprises Endon Cricket Club, located to the south and west of Post Lane. The sports ground is used for both cricket (to the west) and football (to the east). The site access is located in the southeastern corner of the application site. The application site is located in the North Staffordshire Green Belt, approximately 185 metres southeast of Endon. Dwellinghouses, an electricity substation and open fields surround the application site.

PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a permeable area of hardstanding located on the eastern side of the application site to be used for surface parking.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
C2 Sport, Recreation and Open Space
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 - 14

Section(s) 4, 8, 12, 13, 15

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 24/08/2021

Neighbour consultation period ends: 11/08/2021

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments: None

Town / Parish Comments: Endon with Stanley Parish Council – No objection.

SCC Highways: No objection subject to conditions.

Severn Trent Water: No objection to the proposals and do not require a drainage condition to be applied.

Tree Officer: Following receipt of revised plans, the Tree Officer raises no objection subject to a condition.

Sports England

First Response: There is insufficient information to enable Sport England to adequately assess the proposal or to make a substantive response. Please therefore could the following information be provided as soon as possible:

1. The proposal entails the construction of a permeable hardstanding at Endon Cricket Club. The site is understood to be utilised for cricket and football and it is unclear what impact the proposal will have on playing field layout of the site i.e. will the proposal result in the loss of land capable of accommodating a pitch. It is therefore requested that a plan displaying the winter and summer pitch layout is provided alongside the permeable hardstanding area to establish the impact of the proposal on the playing field.

2. No details have been provided as to rationale for the proposal. If the purpose is for car parking, what are the number spaces proposed and what is the proposed layout of the hardstanding area? This information together with the playing pitch layout plan would help to establish if for an ancillary use supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and that it will not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Sport England's interim position on this proposal is to submit a holding objection.

Second Response: The applicant has provided details in relation to the rationale for the car parking area and a revised plan showing the location of the car parking area in context with the wider playing field site.

The proposal entails the construction of 30 parking spaces on playing field land. The site has been marked out for various football pitch types in recent years with the proposed car park not encroaching on to these pitches. Further to this, the largest football pitch capable of being marked out at the site, an under 11/12s pitch (79x52m inclusive of run off area), would still be capable of being accommodated at the site following the proposal.

As mentioned above, the applicant has provided the rationale for the car parking area which includes; the parking supports the needs of the venue following access to the previous parking at the Western Power site no longer being available; the existing playing field land is unsuitable for car parking resulting in damage to the surface; to provide a safe car park for parents and their children; and negate the need to park on the main road which is deemed to be dangerous for both local residents and users of the site.

To inform this response Sport England consulted the ECB and the Football Foundation with the following responses received:

- ECB:
 - Support the proposal as the current provision for parking is inadequate and will benefit both cricket and football clubs.
 - No impact on the cricket pitch.
- Football Foundation:
 - Support the need for car parking at this site. We are aware of the proposal and if planning is granted, then the application will be making an application to the FF's Small Grant Scheme to help deliver the proposal. The club are in need of extra parking due to their overflow being taken away from across the road. Cars are now parking on the dangerous road, outside of houses and it is causing issues around the site, therefore we are supportive from a Health & Safety perspective.
 - They are also using the grass to park on which in bad weather is causing damage and cars to get stuck, so a solid base is needed for the area.
 - We have no real concerns over the impact on the playing field providing the appropriate safety runoff areas can still be accommodated.

Based on the above, the proposed development will result in a minor encroachment onto the playing field. However, the proposal would not reduce the size of any pitches nor reduce the sporting capacity of the site with the largest size pitch capable of being accommodated at the site.

Consequently, Sport England are of the view that the proposal broadly meets exception E3 of our playing fields policy, in that: *'The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:*

- *reduce the size of any playing pitch;*
- *result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);*
- *reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;*
- *result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or*
- *prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.'*

The proposal would also in part meet Sport England E2 with the car park being an ancillary facility supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to the application with it according with Local Plan Policy C2, NPPF paragraph 99 and Sport England Exception Policies E2/E3.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) promotes a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. For decision takers this means (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are more important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission, unless: i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF (2021) identifies three dimensions to sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental. In accordance with policies SS1 and 1a of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, the Council will expect all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protecting, and where possible, enhancing the environment. When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF (2021).

The application site is located in the Open Countryside and Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) is applicable. Policy SS10 states that these rural areas will provide only for development that has an essential need to be located

in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

The proposed development is to provide a car parking area to serve an existing cricket and football club that is located within the Green Belt and Open Countryside; it cannot therefore be located elsewhere. It is therefore considered that there is an essential need for the development to be located in the countryside and in principle it is acceptable.

Sports Pitches

Policy C2 of the Local Plan (2020) seeks to protect existing areas of open space, recreational land and buildings including school playing fields and amenity open space from development, unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Paragraph 99 of the NPPF (2021) echoes policy C2.

Sports England were consulted as part of the application process. Following the submission of additional information from the applicant, Sport England do not object to the proposed development. They consider that the proposed development will result in a minor encroachment onto the playing field. However, the proposal would not reduce the size of any pitches nor reduce the sporting capacity of the site, with the largest size pitch still being capable of being accommodated at the site even with the proposed parking area. They conclude that the proposed development complies with Local Plan Policy C2, NPPF paragraph 99 and Sport England Exception Policies E2/E3.

Green Belt

The application site is located in the Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) and chapter 13 of the NPPF (2021) are applicable. Part (6) of policy SS10 states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

The proposal is for the creation of an area of hardstanding to be utilised as a car park for the existing cricket and football club. Paragraph 150 of the NPPF (2021) outlines that other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of

including land within it. Two such exceptions listed that are applicable to this application include:

- (b) engineering operations; and
- (e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds).

The proposed development will form ancillary development to an existing cricket/football club and therefore it is not considered that the proposal will result in a change of use of the existing land. The proposal will however, comprise an engineering operation and therefore its acceptability (or otherwise) will be dependent upon an assessment of whether it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The proposed development will occur within land that forms part of an existing cricket and sports club. It is therefore not considered that the development will involve encroachment. The proposed development will also comply with the other four purposes of including land within the Green Belt, as detailed in paragraph 138 of the NPPF (2021).

Turning to the development needing to '*preserve the openness of the Green Belt*', it is noted that this does not mean that all new development within the Green Belt will automatically affect openness, instead it is an assessment of a development's harm.

The proposed area of hardstanding will be constructed to the same height as the existing/adjacent grass. It will accommodate 30 cars and will use materials that are common in rural areas and is currently used on the site's existing access. The car parking will be informal, with SCC Highways stating that no demarcation of spaces is required. The land is relatively flat with no cut and fill required in order to create the parking area. An existing boundary hedge will highly screen the hardstanding from public vantage points and the land surrounding the application site is also relatively flat, preventing any long-range views of the development. It is for these reasons that the proposed area of hardstanding will not affect the openness of the Green Belt.

The parking of vehicles will have some impact on openness. Information has been provided that states that parking previously took place along the southern edge of the field. However, due to the age of the football players increasing, a bigger pitch is required, which has prevented vehicles from being able to park in the area previously used. In addition, overflow parking was previously contained within a site on the opposite side of the road however, the use of this land has been withdrawn, leading to people parking along Post Lane. The current area of grass could continue to be used to park vehicles informally, with the same sporadic impact on openness when the area is utilised on match days. The level of parking associated with the sports ground will not increase; the proposed development will simply provide a more formal area for the parking of existing cars. The parking of vehicles within this part of the Green Belt will therefore not affect the openness of the Green Belt as it already occurs.

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development does not comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It therefore complies with policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) and chapter 13 of the NPPF (2021).

Design

Policy DC1 refers to design and seeks to secure development of a high quality which is designed to add value to the area and to respect the site and its surroundings. New development should promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF (2021) requires the design of a development to add to the overall quality of an area, by being sympathetic to local character and by being visually attractive as a result of good architecture.

The proposed area of hardstanding will be sited immediately to the north of the existing access, to the east of the existing cricket/football pitches. It will be irregular in shape with a maximum length of 55 metres and a maximum width of 26 metres. 300mm of grass and topsoil will be removed and the area of hardstanding will be constructed of a 200mm layer of crushed brick, finished with 100mm of Type 1 MOT. It will therefore have a similar appearance to the existing access. The area will be able to accommodate the parking of 30 vehicles.

The majority of the proposed parking area will be screened by the existing roadside hedge. It will therefore not be highly visible from the street scene. Where glimpses of the car park will be gained, its appearance will be of an area of hardstanding, the material of which is not uncommon in a rural area. The area of hardstanding will be utilised only when football/cricket matches are taking place at the existing sports ground and therefore its use will be infrequent and sporadic, reducing its visual impact. Vehicle parking already takes place within and adjacent to the sports ground and therefore the proposed development will not exacerbate the current level of parking in the vicinity. In addition, justification has been provided as to the need for the proposed development.

It is for these reasons that the siting, scale and materials of the proposed car parking area are considered acceptable and will comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

Amenity

Policy DC1 and paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF (2021) seek to secure development that protects amenity, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.

The nearest residential properties to the proposed surface car park are located on the opposite side of Post Lane to the east/northeast, with the closest residential property being 'Linden' which is sited approximately 16 metres to the northeast. A roadside hedge interspersed with mature trees forms the boundary to Post Lane which will filter the views of any vehicles parked on the proposed car park. Given the transient nature of the vehicles and the limited times when vehicles will use the car park, it is not considered that the proposed development will have an adverse impact on the nearest neighbouring properties. In contrast, the proposed car park could

have a positive impact on neighbouring amenity by removing vehicles from parking along Post Lane.

It is for these reasons that the proposed development will have an acceptable impact on neighbouring amenity and will comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

Highway Safety

Policies DC1 and T1 seek to achieve a level of parking and an access that is appropriate to the development it serves.

The Highway Engineer has assessed the application and made the following comments:

‘Additional information clarifies that the proposed hardstanding is to replace a parking area which has been taken up by an increased pitch size.

The area proposed has been used for parking but needs to be hard surfaced to make it usable in all weather conditions.

Improvement of this parking area will prevent or at least reduce parking on the highway. Proposal now includes maintenance of the access road, which should be carried out. Proposal also includes maintenance of the hedges/vegetation on the frontage which will improve visibility at the access without altering streetscene. It does not require removal of any hedge.

Marking out of the parking bays will not be required.’

The Highway Engineer therefore raises no objection to the application, subject to a condition requiring the visibility improvement works, as shown on the ‘Proposed Block Plan – Highway Response’ to be provided prior to the use of the car park and for the visibility to be maintained thereafter.

The proposed development is therefore not considered to have a detrimental effect on highway safety and it will comply with policies DC1 and T1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

Trees

Policy NE2 of the Local Plan (2020) seeks to protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows from loss or deterioration. This will be achieved by requiring them to be retained and integrated within a proposed development unless the need for and benefits of the development clearly outweigh their loss. It goes on to state that the Council will refer to its adopted Tree Strategy in the consideration of proposals and will seek to retain as many trees and as much hedgerow on site as possible.

Policy 2.2.6 of the Council’s adopted Tree Strategy states that *‘the Council will not normally grant planning permission for development proposals which directly or indirectly threaten trees of significant amenity unless there is overriding justification to do so’.*

Mature trees are located to the east of the proposed parking area and appear to have originally formed part of the boundary hedge. These trees are not TPO protected and are not protected by virtue of being sited within a Conservation Area. Nevertheless, these trees should be preserved due to their size and visual prominence.

The proposed parking area will be sited in close proximity to some of these mature trees. These trees are significant and form an important part of the local landscape character, as well as the setting of the Cricket Club.

The Council's Tree Officer undertook a site meeting with the agent to discuss issues relating to potential impact of the proposed new parking area on existing trees along the Post Lane boundary. This resulted in an amended site layout plan being submitted (Drg. No. D104 AO) that shows the agreed Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of relevant significant trees and confirms (by means of the plan itself and its drawing notes) that the proposed new hardstanding/parking area will not encroach within these RPAs. (It should be noted, that whilst the eastern boundary of the proposed hardstanding has been repositioned, no changes have been made to the other boundaries and the space will still accommodate 30 parking spaces. Therefore the revision does not affect the comments made by Sport England or the Highways Engineer).

On this basis, and subject to suitable care/protection during construction, the Tree Officer has confirmed that:

'there would be no significant adverse impact on tree roots systems, or on the soil structure within the core rooting zones, and consequently there would be no requirement for "special measures" construction specification or methods as mitigation, meaning that the basic excavation and infilling with crushed brick base layer and Type 1 MOT top layer as specified on Drg. No. D104 AO would be acceptable with regard to impact on trees.'

The Tree Officer therefore has no objection to the revised application, but requests that a pre-commencement condition is attached that requires the erection of tree protection fencing. The planning agent has agreed to the imposition of this condition. Subject to the imposition of this condition, the proposed development is considered to comply with policy NE2 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development (as shown on the revised drawings) is considered to accord with the relevant policies contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021). As such the application is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE subject to Conditions

Case Officer: Ailsa Berry

Recommendation Date: 09/12/2021

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council