

16 MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6b PLAN/2020/0102

WARD: HV

LOCATION: Westfield Football Club, Kingfield Road, Kingfield, Woking, Surrey, GU22 9BA

PROPOSAL: Erection of an extension to an existing stand, a new toilet block, a new turnstile, netting behind both goals and laying of hardstanding (Retrospective).

APPLICANT: Mr Perkins

OFFICER: Barry Curran

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

Planning applications submitted by or on behalf of Woking Borough Council fall outside the Scheme of Delegation and are required to be determined by the Planning Committee.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This is a full planning application for the extension to the existing visitor stand, a new WC block, a turnstile unit and stop netting and posts to the rear of both goals.

PLANNING STATUS

- Urban Area
- SPA Zone B

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to the site used by Westfield Football Club located to the rear of the Leisure Centre. The site is owned by Woking Borough Council and is part of Woking Park grounds.

The site is approximately 1.74 hectares in area and comprises one enclosed football pitch and training pitch. The club house for Westfield Football Club and other leisure facilities lie to the north of the site.

The site has residential properties to the south and east and the leisure centre to the north.

PLANNING HISTORY

PLAN/2013/1198 - Erection of a 56 seat light weight stand, PA system, 2m high gate on west side of ground and laying of Astro artificial carpet – Permitted 13.02.2004

PLAN/2002/1355 – Demolition of existing pavilion, erect and resite new pavilion within the existing ground. Works associated with the above include disabled parking

16 MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

and extending the training area with 3 No x 8 additional floodlights (Resubmitted application) - Permitted 19.12.02

PLAN/1998/0849 – Renewal of temporary planning permission 95/0464 for the siting of a mobile building adjacent to the existing clubhouse for disabled visitors to Westfield Football Club - Permitted 16.10.98

PLAN/1999/1001 – Removal of 4 existing training light columns and erection of 4 x 8m high training light columns - Refused 12.12.00

PLAN/1997/0835 – Erection of 6 no. x 15 metre high floodlights around the existing football pitch - Permitted 05.02.98

PLAN/1995/0464 – Siting of mobile building adjacent to the existing clubhouse for disabled visitors to Westfield Football Club for a temporary period of 3 years - Permitted 11.08.95

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This is a full planning application for the extension to the existing visitor stand, a new WC block, a turnstile unit and stop netting and posts to the rear of both goals.

The stand extension occurs on the eastern side stand increasing its width by 6.9 metres with an emulating height of 4.1 metres. The frame is constructed of steel with the roof and back wall constructed of plastic sheeting and set atop a concrete base.

The WC is sited along the northern stand and measure a maximum length of 3.4 metres and maximum width of 3.3 metres.

A new turnstile is proposed to be retained towards the western side of the site and to the South of the existing building. This turnstile measures 2.5 metres x 2.5 metres x 2.5 metres.

Retention of the supporting poles and netting to the rear of both goals is also proposed which measure 40 metres in width and at a maximum height of 5 metres.

CONSULTATIONS

None

REPRESENTATIONS

There has been 1no third party letter of objection received in relation to the development. The material planning issues raised in this letter are summarised as follows;

- Loss of amenity by way of increased noise intrusion

Other issues raised in this objection letter relate to the running of the club and its association with the Council and how the running of the club may have detrimental effects on residents' quality of life. These issues are not material planning issues which would be dealt with within this application.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework 2019
Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 12 – Achieving well designed places

Core Strategy Publication Document 2012
CS17 - Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation
CS21 - Design
CS25 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Development Management Policies DPD 2016
DM3 - Outdoor Recreation and Sport

Supplementary Planning Guidance
Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' 2008

PLANNING ISSUES

1. The main issues to consider in determining this application are; the principle of development, impact on character and impact on residential amenity.

Principle of Development

2. The works, which form part of this planning application, are a mandatory element requested by the Football Association Ground Grading as Westfield Football Club has recently gained promotion to the Isthmian League - South Central Division by which they are required to update facilities in line with the FA Ground Grading Criteria. Failure to provide these facilities could result in the demotion and limit future development of football in the Borough. The site is currently used as a football ground and has been for many years. There is a clear functional need for the development to support the use of the area for sport and recreation while allowing the club to continue to play in its current league.
3. Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 notes that *“Proposals for the provision of outdoor sport and recreational facilities or extensions to, or intensification of use of, existing facilities will be permitted subject to other Development Plan policies and provided that they meet the following criteria:*
 - (i) The development is of an appropriate design, scale and layout relative to its intended use and surrounding area;*
 - (ii) The development will not have an adverse visual impact;*
 - (iii) The development, if involving agricultural land, is located on the lowest practicable grade and seeks to avoid the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) unless there are overriding planning benefits for the development;*
 - (iv) The development will not cause harm to a site of nature conservation, landscape or historic value that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated;*
 - (v) The re-use of any existing buildings is prioritised and, in the case of a new facility, is satisfactorily integrated with existing buildings where present;*

16 MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

(vi) The development will not generate unacceptable activity or give rise to loss of amenity by virtue of noise, smell, light pollution, overlooking, traffic or other general disturbance; and

(vii) Opportunities are taken to connect to and enhance the surrounding Green Infrastructure Network.”

4. The principle of the works in intensification of existing recreational facilities is supported and is therefore considered acceptable. The main considerations, however, are the impact on the character of the area and impact on neighbouring dwellings amenity.

Design Considerations and Impact on Character of Area

5. Policy CS21 requires new development to pay due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land; to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties. One of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework is to seek to secure high quality design. The extension to the stand would emulate the style and form of the pre-existing stand approved under PLAN/2013/1198 with a maximum height of 4.1 metres at the front sloping to 3.8 metres increasing it width by 6.9 metres containing 56 additional flip-down seats. The stand is located within the existing fencing surrounding the pitch and located to its eastern side with a design considered to be appropriate for its use. Whilst set on land higher than Kingfield Road, due to its position set within the site it is not considered to dominate the appearance of the road. The extension would be screened by an existing bund and vegetation from the access road to the rear of Queen Elizabeth Way and is softened in its appearance from the rear of the properties along Elmbridge Lane by the existing bund and vegetation. It is, therefore, not considered to harm the visual amenities of the surrounding area.
6. Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 encourages extensions to and intensification of existing recreational facilities provided that the development is of a scale and character appropriate to the area, not giving rise to a loss of amenity. In addition of the extension to the existing stand it is proposed to retain a new turnstile building and WC towards the western side of the site and along the eastern side of the existing building respectively. These additions are of a modest scale with the WC addition measuring 3.4 metres in width and 3.3 metres in length adopting a flat roof form at 2.6 metres in height adjoining the main clubhouse on its south-eastern corner. The new turnstile is sited towards the western side of the clubhouse and measures 2.5 metres in width, 2.5 metres in length and stands at 2.5 metres in height and is sited within the perimeters of the site. Both buildings are considered to be of an acceptable appearance and would constitute additions one would expect to see at similar recreational grounds.
7. It is further proposed to retain the netting and poles to the rear of both goals. The nets stretch approximately 40 metres in width and stand at a height of 5 metres including the poles with a black 'stop that ball' netting with 2mm twine, which is understood to be the type of netting that is commonly used around football grounds and community facilities. In addition to this, it is proposed to retain the 9no posts at interval of approximately 5 metres which would be support the proposed netting.

16 MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

8. As mentioned, the netting would stand at 5 metres in height with the supporting posts located at approximately 5 metre intervals and coloured black to allow for a discreet appearance. This particular netting is manufactured for the specific use for football related activity and includes a black colour due to its subtle appearance.
9. Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 requires proposals for outdoor and recreational facilities to be of an appropriate design which do not have an adverse visual impact. It is not uncommon to see features such as turnstiles and toilets as well as safety netting on sports grounds around the borough. The adoption of a modest height along with a layout and netting is considered to minimise its impact on the character of the area whilst maintaining a muted appearance, so as to allow for ease of play and preserves the character of the area. As such, the development is considered to be in accordance with the provision of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016.

Impact on Neighbour Amenities

10. The application site forms part of recreational facilities in the Kingsfield area of the Borough with residential properties located in excess of 50 metres to the East of the site and similar properties to the South. The majority of development would occur towards the northern and north-eastern side of the site. The extension to the existing stand is situated 52 – 55 metres from the boundary of the rear gardens of Elmcroft and Parkside House in Elmbridge Lane. The stand fronts onto the pitch and whilst a side view is obtainable from the stand to these properties, due to these distances a significant loss of privacy is not considered to occur. In relation to the properties along Queen Elizabeth Way the back of the stand would face these properties so a loss of privacy would not occur.
11. Sited within the perimeters of the recreational grounds, the WC and turnstile building are located in excess of 90 metres from these neighbouring properties and are, therefore, not considered to cause a significant level of harm to the amenities enjoyed by these properties.
12. Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 advises that new developments should “*achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties avoiding significant harmful impact in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight, or an overbearing effect due to bulk, proximity or outlook*”. It is acknowledged that the safety netting and posts results in significant additions within the grounds at 5 metres in height but it also has to be acknowledged that the loss of views out over third party land i.e. recreational grounds is not protected and is not considered a material planning consideration unless the proposed development would detrimentally reduce light or cause an overbearing impact. These views cannot be protected in this way particularly in a suburban area. The netting, adopting a muted colour and largely screened by the existing hedging, is diaphanous and therefore visually transparent and would not lead to loss of light or an overbearing impact. Furthermore, the netting is sited at least 35 metres from the eastern boundary of neighbouring properties which further reduces the visual impact on the netting whilst offering a remedy to reduce the risk of damage to people and property.

16 MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

13. The application does not seek to directly increase the intensity of the use of the site; Westfield First and Reserves team and occasionally Woking FC train on the pitch. While the extension to the stand provide additional facilities, this does not indicate an increase level of spectators.
14. The development is considered to be acceptable in terms of its relationship with neighbouring properties surrounding the site, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 and Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' 2008.

Conclusion

15. To conclude, the development including the extension to the existing stand, new WC and turnstile buildings and erection of netting and posts to the rear of each goal would provide facilities to allow Westfield Football Club to remain in their current football league under FA Regulations. The proposal would not significantly harm the amenity of the neighbouring dwelling and would not harm the visual amenities of the surrounding area. The development is considered to be an acceptable form of development that complies with provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012, Policy DM3 of the Development Management Policies DPD 2016 and Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' 2008. Approval is accordingly recommended.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Site visit photographs.
2. Site Notice (Major Development)(12.12.2020)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that planning permission be Granted subject to the following Conditions:

1. The posts on the safety netting hereby permitted should and be externally finished black in colour with the netting hereby approved finished black in colour and maintained as such thereafter unless otherwise first agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To protect the character and visual amenities of the area

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with approved plans and particulars;
 - Drawing No. M021-003 Rev P2
 - Drawing No. M021-201 Rev P2
 - Drawing No. M021-501 Rev P2
 - Drawing No. M021-502 Rev P2
 - Drawing No. M021-503 Rev P2
 - Drawing No. M021-504 Rev P2

16 MARCH 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

- STOP THAT BALL™ - SOCKETED BALL STOP NET & POST SYSTEM - made from 2mm HDPP twine from Net World Sports

Reason:

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Informatives:

1. The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
2. You are advised that Council officers may undertake inspections without prior warning to check compliance with approved plans and to establish that all planning conditions are being complied with in full. Inspections may be undertaken both during and after construction.