APPLICATION NUMBER: 20/01608/FUL

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
20/01608/FUL	Ryan Killeen	5 February 2021

Address: Rochdale Cricket Lacross And Squash Club Bridgefold Road Rochdale OL11 5BX

Proposal: Erection of building for indoor cricket practice

PUBLICITY	**Weekly list expired?**	Y	**Site notice expired?**	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	**Press Notice expired?**	N/A

DELEGATION	**Significant departure from local plan?**	N	**Contrary to national policy?**	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	**Contrary to previous decision?**	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	**Called in or Planning Panel objection?**	N

COMMENTS	**Planning Panel comments received?**	N
	Neighbour comments received?	Y

EIA	**Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?**	N/A

CONDITIONS	**Pre-commencement conditions proposed?**	Y
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	Y

RECOMMENDATION	Grant Subject to Conditions

CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: AT **DATE: 19.02.2021**

SITE

This application relates to Rochdale Cricket, Lacrosse and Squash Club. A multi-sports complex in the Spotland Bridge area of Rochdale, approximately 1km west of Rochdale Town Centre. The ownership boundary of the club spans approximately 5.5ha, covering two football pitches, a cricket pitch, clubhouse and ancillary facilities and car parking and access via Bridgefold Road to the north.

This application relates to a small area of land immediately northwest of the boundary of the cricket pitch, which is currently used informally as a storage area for the club's mobile wicket cover. The area is bounded by a wooded area to the east with a tall evergreen hedge immediately north.

PROPOSAL

This application proposes a structure to accommodate indoor cricket nets for training. The structure is of a tubular form with a semi-circular elevation and cross-sections. The north and south facing semi-circular elevations are approximately 9.1m high and 18m wide at the base, and the proposed length is approximately 48m. It is to be finished in a blue and white stretched PVC membrane. The application also seeks permission for the erection of a 2.4m high paladin fence.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – February 2019
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SP3/M The Strategy for Middleton

C6 Improving health and wellbeing
C8 Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities

P1 Improving image
P3 Improving design of new development

G6 Enhancing green infrastructure
G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity
G8 Managing water resources and flood risk
G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

T2 Improving accessibility

DM1 General Development requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):
G/D/1 Defined Urban Area
G/3 Protection of existing recreational open space
EM/7 Development and flood risk

EM/8 Protection of surface and ground water

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

N/A

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

United Utilities
Standard conditions relating to surface water drainage and separate drainage systems recommended.

Highways And Engineering
We view the proposed development to be part and parcel of this facility.

We do not expect the additional facilities to be in use during the peak period and we expect that for the most part the indoor facility will have the same user group as the outdoor facilities we do not therefore expect any changes to the traffic profile and do not raise any objections to this proposal.

Lead Local Flood Authority/Drainage
Summary: Before providing any suitable Drainage Conditions, the applicant should provide some details of dealing with soakaway from the large structure.

Environmental Control (Landfill Gas)
No comments.

Tree Officer
No comments received to date

Gtr Manchester Ecology Unit
No comments received to date

Sport England
Summary: Objection as the design of the cricket facility will not be fit for its intended sporting purpose and is contrary to Sport England's Planning Policy Objectives and paragraph 127 of the NPPF.

REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent to all surrounding properties and a site notice posted in the vicinity of the site. One letter of objection was received raising the following concerns:

Noise and the subsequent disturbance to residential amenity
Officer's Response: Addressed in 'Amenity' section

Noise and the subsequent disturbance to local wildlife
Officer's Response: Addressed in 'Ecology' section

The appearance of the structure
Officer's Response: Addressed in 'Design' section

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

Policy C6 of the Adopted Core Strategy seeks to improve people's health and well-being and reduce health inequalities through creating an environment which promotes and supports health lifestyles and maintaining and enhancing… sport and recreational areas. Policy C8 seeks to promote the provision of better community, sport and leisure facilities.

The site is located within the Defined Urban Area, policy G/D/1 of the UDP, which seeks to concentrate development in urban areas, is therefore relevant. Further to this, the proposed site is located in an area that is designated for recreational outdoor space and currently comprises an area of open space adjacent to the existing cricket field, under saved UDP policy G/3:

G/3 The development of public or private recreational open space for any other purpose will not be permitted unless one or more of the following exceptions applies:

…

d) The development comprises a built recreational facility of greater benefit to the wider community than the open space being lost and does not result in a serious deficiency in open space in the area.

With regard to criterion (d), such proposals will only be permitted where no suitable alternative brownfield site exists.

School playing fields which are surplus to educational requirements, and privately-owned sports grounds which have deteriorated due to lack of use and maintenance, will continue to be safeguarded from development as they still offer potential to meet current and future recreational needs.

Paragraph 97 of the NPPF also states:

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on 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 benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

The proposed training facility is considered to meet exemption d) of UDP policy G/3; which similarly aligns with the contents of exemption b) of paragraph 97 of the NPPF (reaffirmed within Sport England's Consultee response) as the proposed facility would be sited on an area of land that does not comprise the formalised area of the cricket playing field and is of limited recreational value as a result. The proposed structure is intended to house four lanes of practice nets which would signify an improvement in the provision of recreational and sporting facilities at the site, and would be a unique occurrence within the borough.

Therefore, subject to an assessment of other planning considerations within the scheme, the principle of an indoor cricket training facility at this location is acceptable and in accordance with the UDP, Core Strategy and NPPF.

Design and Visual Amenity

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, in addition to being sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting and maintaining a strong sense of place.

CS policy P3 requires all new developments to enhance the borough's identity and sense of place and ensure that buildings contribute positively to the townscape. CS policy P2 seeks to protect and enhance the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside through using heritage assets positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image

The application seeks to erect a substantial (circa 900m^2) semi-circular prism structure finished in a stretched PVC membrane, supplied by Halton Sports Structures. It is acknowledged that views of the structure would be extremely limited from public vantage points by virtue of the dense foliage bounding the site to the north, south and east, in addition to the separation distances present to the west.

The wider sports facility comprises of a substantial clubhouse building, outdoor cricket nets and various other structures used for storage and other ancillary purposes. Whilst the proposal would have an undoubtedly significant impact on the overall appearance of the site as a result of its size and scale, it is not considered that it would be unduly harmful in this respect as the appearance of the structure is considered characteristic of a sporting facility.

Further to this, siting of the structure ensures views from 3 sides are mostly obscured by foliage. The amendments secured to ensure a predominantly green finish are considered to reduce the contrast between the green of the surrounding foliage and playing fields and the proposed structure. The remaining elevation which faces across the cricket pitch would be of little visual interest through its blank, split-tone finish and would not appear unduly prominent, or at odds with the rest of the site.

The application also proposes a 2.4m high paladin fence around the proposed structure. It has been agreed that the fence is to be finished in RAL 6005 Green with

the intention that the fence would have limited prominence especially when viewed against the green finish of the structure, surrounding foliage and cricket pitch.

In light of the above assessment, it is considered that the proposed sports structure would constitute an acceptable standard of design and would therefore accord with policies P3 and DM1 of the Adopted Core Strategy and the NPPF.

Detailed Design

It is acknowledged that Sport England have objected to the development on the basis that the proposal would not be fit for purpose, following comments from The English and Welsh Cricket Board (ECB); paragraph 127 of the NPPF states "*Planning decisions should ensure that developments… a)… function well… f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users."*

The ECB have raised concern in this regard, over the following:

- *The operating temperature for an indoor facility requires temperature to be maintained at 16-20C,*
- *Lightning levels for recreational cricket are 750 Lux and upto 1500 Lux for centres of excellence with a uniformity throughout the playing area*
- *The height of the structure due to its doom shape will not create enough height for the minimum 7.5m netting structure and then space above for ancillary M&E infrastructure*
- *There is no detailed specifications of flooring which is an essential element of a fit for purpose facility.*

Additionally, both ECB and Sport England designs would have an expected internal layout standards to include:

1. *Reception area / entrance*
2. *Bag Drop*
3. *Associated changing rooms*
4. *Toilets*
5. *Viewing balcony and associated step free access*

To meet all required standard for a fit for purpose indoor facility the size would be in excess of 1100m2 – this proposal is below that specification.

It is noted that the applicant has since provided documents from the suppliers of the structure that indicate the detailed specification would meet those which the ECB raised concern over. Notwithstanding this, it is not considered that failure to fulfil these requirements would amount to a material level of planning harm as to warrant refusal.

Further to this, no justification has been provided as to why an increase in floor space from 864m^2 to 1100m^2 is necessary to avoid any harm, where it would seem to accommodate ancillary functions that would contribute to the overall level of functionality, but would not result in an unacceptable level of harm in their absence.

Amenity

The proposal would be sited approximately 70m north of the closest houses. The intended purpose of providing a facility for batting and bowling practice is not considered to amount to an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that additional acoustic attenuation is offered through the presence of significant foliage between the proposal and the closest dwellings and it is expected that no unacceptable impact to the residential amenity currently afforded would occur.

Highways

The proposal is not considered to intensify the use of the site so significantly as to warrant any concerns with regards to highways safety. The site has a number of existing facilities which accommodates different groups of visitors to the sites at various points throughout the day and year.

An indoor facility such as this is considered as a substitute for the existing outdoor provisions and would see most use throughout the autumn and winter months, outside of the regular cricket season and would likely not increase peak traffic to the site. Further to this, the Council's Highways Officer has been consulted and has not raised any concern.

Ecology

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity.

All British bat species are fully protected through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 as European Protected Species (EPS). They also receive some protection through inclusion in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or obstruct access to any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection.

All wild birds in the UK are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its

eggs. Bird species listed in Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act, such as barn owl, receive further protection which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb these species while building a nest or in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or to disturb dependent young of such a bird.

Policy G7 of the Adopted Core Strategy states that "sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection." The proposal includes the removal of two trees which are not considered capable of housing species of bats and no evidence of nesting birds was recorded upon a site visit by an officer, although it is recognised that this took place in December and the presence of nesting birds is highly unlikely. The standard conditions to prevent any clearing of shrubs and trees between March and September has been repeated and an informative attached to inform the applicant of their responsibilities regarding protected species.

The application also proposes the removal of upwards of 40 saplings suffering from ash dieback. The Council's ecology consultant has deemed this necessary. Due to their limited ecological value, it is not considered necessary to require replanting at a 2:1 ratio to fulfil the aims of Policy G6 of the Core Strategy. In addition to the mature foliage to be removed, it is considered a suitable compromise to require a replanting scheme of 7 trees via condition within the boundaries of the site. It is considered that the site is capable of hosting high forest trees which are of the highest ecological value.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant subject to the following conditions:

1. The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

   Reason. Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. This permission relates to the following plans:-

   RCC-SVA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2000 – Rev. A – Location plan and Existing site plan
   RCC-SVA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2001 – Rev. A – Proposed site plan
   RCC-SVA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2005 – Proposed floor plan
   RCC-SVA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2010 – Rev. A – Proposed east and west elevations
   RCC-SVA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2011 – Rev. A – Proposed north and south elevations

   and the development shall be carried out in complete accordance with these drawings hereby approved.

   Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the saved

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, the development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until full details of replacement tree planting of at least 6 no. trees have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The tree planting shall be completed within the next planting season following occupation of the development hereby permitted. Any trees or shrubs planted or retained in accordance with this condition which are removed, uprooted, destroyed, die or become severely damaged or become seriously diseased within 5 years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

   Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped having regard to its location and the nature of the proposed development and in accordance with policies P3, DM1 and G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. The metalwork of the boundary treatments hereby approved shall be colour treated green RAL 6005 upon installation and shall be retained as such thereafter.

   Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Notwithstanding the provision of condition 2 of this permission, the exterior of the indoor cricket facility hereby approved shall be coloured in RAL 6001 Emerald Green and RAL 9010 Pure White and shall be retained as such thereafter.

   Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use classes) Order 1987, (as amended), and the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015 (as amended) or any equivalent Order following the revocation and re-enactment thereof, the building hereby approved shall only be used for the purpose of indoor cricket training and for no other purpose.

   Reason: In the interests of amenity in accordance with Core Strategy policy DM1 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. No clearance of trees and shrubs in preparation for (or during the course of) development shall take place during the bird nesting season (March - August inclusive) unless an ecological survey has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to establish whether the site is utilised

for bird nesting. Should the survey reveal the presence of any nesting species, then no development shall take place during the period specified above unless a mitigation strategy has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which provides for the protection of nesting birds during the period of works on site.

Reason: In order to prevent any habitat disturbance to nesting birds in accordance with Policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Procedure Statement

The Local Planning Authority worked proactively with the applicant to identify various solutions during the application process to ensure that the proposal comprised sustainable development and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and would accord with the development plan. These were incorporated into the scheme and/or have been secured by planning condition.

Notes for Applicant:

Report Author Ryan Killeen