

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

13th January 2021

Planning Application 20/01299/FUL

Installation of a Play Tower unit 9m in height.

Arrow Valley Park, Battens Drive, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 0LJ,

**Applicant: Mr Robert Heard
Ward: Winyates Ward**

(see additional papers for site plan)

The case officer of this application is Charlotte Wood, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 64252 Ext 3412 Email: Charlotte.Wood@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The application site forms part of Arrow Valley Country Park, which is located on the River Arrow and comprises 900 acres of open space and incorporates Arrow Valley Lake. The park was built by Redditch Development Corporation in the 1970's and lies to the west of Battens Drive and to the south of Coventry Highway. It is the largest of Redditch's parks and comprises a visitor centre with a café, sailing club, BMX facility, disc golf and waymarked trails. A number of car parks serve the park.

Proposal Description

The planning application relates to a 9 metre tall "play tower" which forms part of a new wildlife themed play park at Arrow Valley Country Park. The play tower forms part of the wider playground design which also includes sensory play, a toddler area, zip wire, trampoline and amphitheatre. This park improvement scheme follows a successful tender bid from playground designers "Kompan" who put forward the successful playground design and have therefore been commissioned by Redditch Borough Council to build the play area.

The construction of the play area has progressed and is located to the north of the lake and to the west of the visitor centre.

Whilst Schedule 2, Part 12, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) allows for development comprising small buildings, works or equipment on land belonging to a local authority, this is subject to limitations. One such limitation is that the height of development cannot exceed 4 metres and therefore this application solely relates to the 9 metre tall play tower located towards the western side of the new play area scheme. The remainder of the scheme is considered to benefit from planning permission by virtue of the GPDO.

The play tower subject to this application comprises a brightly coloured steel structure formed of levels offering viewing platforms, a full height external tube slide, a further 2.7 metre slide, as well as climbing walls, and sensory and tactile panels.

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Relevant Policies :

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4

Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy 13: Primarily Open Space

Policy 16: Natural Environment

Policy 39: Built Environment

Policy 40: High Quality Design and Safer Communities

Policy 43: Leisure, Tourism and Abbey Stadium

Others

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

NPPG National Planning Practice Guidance

Relevant Planning History

No relevant planning history

Consultations

Cllr Fleming

No comments received to date

Cllr Lovell

No comments received to date

Cllr Smith

No comments received to date

Arboricultural Officer

No objections raised. The tower would have no impact on the surrounding trees.

Community Safety Officer

No objection. Equipment complies with the latest EN standard so quality and safety should be acceptable.

West Mercia Constabulary

No objections

Public Consultation Response

Three site notices erected on site. No representations have been received.

Assessment of Proposal

Arrow Valley Country Park is designated as Primarily Open Space (POS) on the proposals map and therefore Policy 13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan no. 4 (BoRLP4) is most relevant when considering the principle of new development. The main aim of this policy is to ensure that designated POS is protected, and where appropriate,

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enhanced to improve its quality, value, multifunctionality and accessibility. Loss of POS is resisted unless a number of considerations are met.

With regards to the current proposal, the play tower forms part of an improvement scheme which is being undertaken in order to provide a more inclusive and higher quality play provision at the park, which would provide for younger and older children and would also include pieces of equipment for wheelchair users and autistic visitors. The play tower itself is seen as a central feature which would attract a large number of visitors.

Given that this development contributes towards an enhanced and improved area of POS which would increase its value, functionality and accessibility to more users, the proposal clearly meets the aims of Policy 13 of the BoRLP4, and therefore the principle of development is supported. Furthermore Policy 43 of the BoRLP4 supports proposals relating to leisure facilities provided they are located within a sustainable location, which is accessible by a choice of transport. In view of this, Arrow Valley Country Park is an established leisure and tourist attraction which is in a sustainable location, in walking distance to bus stops.

Whilst the principle of development is considered acceptable it is still considered necessary to consider other material planning considerations.

Policy 39 of the BoRLP4 requires development to contribute positively to the local character of the area. Paragraph 39.5 states that areas should be designed to ensure they make places better for people, and that community views should be taken into account in the design of development. Having regards to this, it is noted that Leisure Services carried out public consultation prior to commissioning the chosen play area design.

Further to the above policy, Policy 40 of the BoRLP seeks development of a good design including that which contributes to both public and private spaces. In order to achieve this, Policy 40 expects proposals to be of a high quality design which reflects or complements the local surroundings, is of an appropriate siting and layout, is accessible, and encourages community safety.

With regards to the above, whilst the play tower is a substantial size, it is made up of numerous elements which add interest to its visual appearance and break up its overall massing. Furthermore, the bright colours and patterned finish of the structure reflects the "wildlife theme" of the new play area, which in turn integrates into its outdoor setting. The play area is sited to the north of the lake, in a slightly elevation position, and the location of the tower is on the western side. Although the height of the tower means it is a prominent feature, it would be seen within the context of the developed park area and other equipment, including the zip-wire directly to the west. The siting of the proposed structure is therefore considered acceptable.

Community Safety and West Mercia Police have been consulted in relation to the proposal. The Community Safety Officer has noted that the equipment is stated to comply

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with the latest European Standards, and therefore is satisfactory in terms of quality and safety. In view of the height of the structure however, it has been suggested that signage is placed near to the equipment to alert users to the danger of climbing on the outside of the tower and that this should not be done. The potential for external climbing is a Health and Safety matter and it is for the site operator/installer to consider what warning or signage should be displayed, a fact that would apply to all the play elements on the site, not just the tower. The advice of the Community Safety is therefore added as informative so the applicant can take action as appropriate.

West Mercia Police raised no objections to the proposal.

As there are mature trees located to the south west of the proposal site, the Tree Officer has been consulted. The Tree Officer has noted that tree pruning has already taken place to facilitate the work that has already taken place on site. Notwithstanding this, no tree related objections have been raised in relation to the play tower. As any necessary future pruning of the trees would be carried out by the Council's Tree Officer, no conditions have been recommended for this application.

In view of location of the site, 400 metres from any neighbouring dwellings, the development is not considered to cause any adverse impact to residential amenity.

There have been no third party representations received as a result of public consultation.

Conclusion

The play tower subject to this application would enhance and improve an existing area of POS, which provides a valued leisure facility for the community. Given that the equipment would expect to attract a wide range of users to this community facility, the proposal scores highly in relation to the social aspect of sustainable development. The siting, design and appearance of the development is considered acceptable, and given that no technical concerns have been raised by consultees, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and therefore it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be **GRANTED subject to the following conditions:**

Conditions:

- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission.

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Reason :- In accordance with the requirements of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and drawings:

Location Plan - drawing no. CAS-64003-X6W5L1_PLANNING_01 at scale 1:2500

Site Plan - drawing no. CAS-64003-X6W5L1 at scale 1:1250

Kompan Design Approval Document - KDSM Identification: PCTG200112 at scale 1:50 & 1:100

Reason: To provide certainty to the extent of the development hereby approved in the interests of proper planning.

Informative

The operator/installer are advised to consider signage alerting users to the dangers of climbing on the outside of the tower.

Procedural matters

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because application site relates to land belonging to Redditch Borough Council. As such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.