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**18<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

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**Planning Application 22/01171/FUL**

**A Multi Use Games Area consisting of a steel fence system and a tarmacadam base painted sports line markings.**

**Greenlands Playing Fields Adj, South Redditch Sports And Social Club,  
Throckmorton Road, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 7RS.**

**Applicant: Mr Robert Heard  
Ward: Greenlands 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 Greenlands Playing Fields, which is an area of Primarily Open Space (POS) located in Greenlands, on the south east side of the cloverleaf interchange. The development site measures approximately 550 square metres in area and lies to the west of South Redditch Sports and Social Club and its car park and is accessed off Throckmorton Road. There is a Public Right of Way (PRoW) directly north of the proposal site which provides pedestrian access to the site. Beyond this to the north is a heavily treed area, which Wharrington Brook runs through, and further still to the north lies allotment gardens. Playing fields surround the proposal site on the south and west sides and these include marked pitches. There are residential dwellings to the north, east and south of the site, the closest of which are positioned 100 metres to the east of the proposed development. The nearest trees are approximately 8 metres to the north of the proposal site, beyond the footpath.

**Proposal Description**

The planning application relates to a proposed Multi Use Games Area (MUGA). The MUGA would comprise a coloured tarmacadam base which would be painted with lined markings so that it could be used for a number of sports and games. The rectangular games area, measuring 22 metres by 13 metres, would be enclosed by a steel fence system which would be just above 2 metres in height along its lengths and just above 3 metres in height along most its width. There would be four basketball/netball hoops located on each side of the rectangular games area. There would also be four mini recessed goals and two larger recessed goals incorporated into the steel fence system that forms the walls of the games area. The enclosed games area can be accessed by entrance gaps within the steel fencing, which includes an access for disabled persons. The information provided with the application states that the games area can be used for a number of sports and activities including football, basketball and mini tennis, and is suitable for a wide age range. To the south of the MUGA would be two pieces of climbing equipment for further activity and exercise; these would also be sited on a tarmacadam base. A single bench would also be located directly outside of the MUGA to the south.

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The funding for this project has arisen from S106 contributions from a nearby housing site, land off Green Lane, planning reference: 18/00169/FUL. The proposal included an on site play area for toddlers and young children, however there was not any on site provision for older children. The Greenlands Playing Fields site was therefore considered a suitable off-site facility as it is well used and large in size. The installation of a MUGA was considered a beneficial enhancement as it would allow for sports to be played during the winter, when the grass pitch could not be used so easily and would also provide a multi-purpose facility, allowing other sports such as basketball, cricket and tennis to be played on it.

The MUGA scheme was then subject to a tender bid, which was won by Kompan who have designed and submitted the current proposal and will install the MUGA and exercise equipment on site if planning permission is granted.

It should be noted that Schedule 2, Part 12, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) allows for development comprising of small buildings, works or equipment on land belonging to a local authority, subject to limitations. As one of these limitations prohibits buildings or equipment with a capacity over 200 cubic, and the capacity of the proposed MUGA would exceed this, the proposal requires express planning permission. The exercise equipment and the bench proposed to the south of the MUGA would not however require planning permission.

**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**

**Community Safety Officer**

This type of development can attract anti-social behaviour, and whilst this could be improved by good surveillance, the site does not offer alternative locations for the development where the situation would be improved. Although anti-social behaviour

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could be deterred to some extent by securing the facility, given that this is an open facility for the public to use, this would not be an option here either.

## **Police West Mercia Constabulary**

As the MUGA would remain open to the public and is easy to access it may attract damage to the MUGA, graffiti or anti-social behaviour. It is therefore suggested that the gates of the MUGA are secured at night and signage to include emergency contact details.

## **Leisure Services (Sports Provision/Facilities)**

The development will improve the POS and support the active and healthy Strategic Purpose. The MUGA would also support local football clubs that use the fields and would provide a multi-purpose provision where basketball, cricket etc could be played.

## **Sport England**

No objections following further information demonstrating the benefits of the development and showing that there would be no loss of grass playing pitches as a result of the development. Condition is recommended to ensure that the number of playing pitches are maintained.

## **North Worcestershire Water Management**

No objections and no conditions recommended.

## **Highways Redditch**

No objections and no conditions recommended.

## **WRS - Noise**

Whilst there is a reasonable distance between the proposed development and the nearest residential dwellings it is recommended that neoprene washers are fitted between the fence posts and panels in order to minimise noise from ball impacts.

## **Tree Officer**

No objections

## **Public Consultation Response**

One letter of objection has been received which raises concerns that the proposed development would be subject to vandalism and would be misused after hours.

## **Assessment of Proposal**

### **Principle of Development**

The application site forms part of Greenlands Playing Fields which is shown as designated Primarily Open Space (POS) on the proposals map. Policy 13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan no. 4 (BoRLP4) is relevant when considering the principle of new development. The main aim of this policy is to ensure that designated POS is protected,

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and where appropriate, 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 MUGA scheme has been proposed in order to improve and enhance the current playing field provision. The development would allow a wide variety of activities and exercise to take place in the area and would be suitable to use in all weather conditions unlike the existing grass playing fields. The MUGA has been designed to be multi-functional but also suitable for a wide age range, as well as being accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The site can be easily accessed by pedestrian footpaths and there is a vehicular access off Throckmorton Road leading to the parking area of the adjacent South Redditch Sports and Social Club, which has changing rooms facilities available.

As the proposal affects an existing playing field, it is a statutory requirement to consult Sport England. They have provided comments on the application and have had particular regard to paragraph 99 of the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which broadly oppose development which results in a loss of or prejudices the use of playing fields unless certain exceptions can be demonstrated. Exception 5 of Sport England Policy requires that new outdoor sports facilities on existing playing fields are of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss or prejudice to the use of the area of playing field. Proposals are also required to demonstrate that the loss of any area of playing field would not have an unacceptable impact on the current and potential playing pitch provision on site.

Having regard to the above, Sport England initially raised concerns that the proposed MUGA would be sited over an area of the playing field where an existing five by five pitch was sited and this may affect the capacity of the playing field to provide pitches. Sport England also sought the views of the Football Foundation who stated that whilst MUGAs are promoted in the Local Football Facility plan, there is a limited stock of five vs five football pitches in the area. As such, Sport England requested that further information and/or amendments were provided to show that the proposal would not result in a loss of grass pitches. Following these comments, amended plans were received which slightly altered the location of the proposed MUGA as well slightly reducing its size. The amended plans also demonstrated that there would be sufficient space on site to re-mark the five vs five pitch so that there were no loss of playing pitches. Since receiving the amended plans, Sport England have confirmed that they no longer have concerns regarding the application, however they have requested that the re-marking of the five vs five grass pitch is secured by a planning condition.

Leisure Services have also commented on the proposal, stating that the development would improve the area of POS and support the active and healthy strategic purpose of Redditch Borough Council. Furthermore, it will help to support local football clubs that use the fields as well as providing an area where other sports can be played.

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In view of the above it is concluded that the development would enhance and improve an existing area of POS by increasing its functionality and accessibility to more users whilst maintaining the existing grassed pitches. The proposal is therefore considered to clearly meet 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, the Greenlands playing fields is an established leisure facility which is located in an accessible and sustainable location, within walking distance of many residents. Whilst the principle of development is considered acceptable it is still considered necessary to consider other material planning considerations.

**Design and Safety**

Policy 39 of the BoRLP4 requires development to contribute positively to the local character of the area. Further to this, 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, the new MUGA would be sited close to the footpath so that it would be easily accessible during winter months. The MUGA would comprise of a coloured tarmac base and a high quality steel enclosure made up of panels and posts. Some of the panels would be brightly coloured so that the facility was vibrant and attractive to users. The steel panel and post system would also provide a strong structure, which would make the facility vandalism proof and ensure that sports could be played safely. The vertical tubes which make up the panels would be positioned close together so that even small balls would not escape the MUGA. With regards to its siting, design and appearance, the proposed development is considered acceptable.

Community Safety and West Mercia Police have been consulted in relation to the proposal. The Community Safety Officer has highlighted that this type of recreational development can attract issues with anti-social behaviour. Whilst this is noted, it is not considered that any improvements to the proposal could be made through amendments and these concerns have been balanced against the benefits of the proposed community facility, which include social benefits as well as benefits to health and wellbeing. West Mercia Police have also commented that as the facility would be open to the public and easy to access, it could be targeted as an area for graffiti and vandalism. Suggestions were made that the facility could be secured at night and a sign with emergency contact numbers could be erected nearby. With regards to securing the facility, the applicant has stated that the MUGA is proposed to be an open facility for the public to use and it is not therefore intended that the MUGA would be locked. With regards to providing emergency contact details, this can be suggested to the applicant through an informative, however it is not considered that it would be reasonable to request this by planning condition. Notwithstanding these suggestions, it is noted that the MUGA would be sited in close proximity to the existing sports club building, allowing some natural surveillance of the facility, which would assist in reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour occurring.

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Furthermore details of the construction of the MUGA have been provided by the applicant which show that the structure has been designed to be strong and resistant to vandalism.

## **Drainage**

The Drainage Officer has commented that the proposal site falls within flood zone 1 and is not at any significant fluvial or surface water flood risk. Based on the information available, the Drainage Officer has confirmed that there are no reasons to withhold consent on flood risk grounds and that no conditions relating to drainage are necessary.

## **Highways**

Worcestershire County Council Highways have also raised no objections to the proposal, noting that the existing car parking would not be affected by the development and the increase in traffic as a result of the development would be minimal.

## **Noise, Nuisances, and Residential Amenity**

In view of location of the MUGA, which is approximately 100 metres from any neighbouring dwellings, the development is not considered to cause any significant harm to residential amenity. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) have reviewed the proposal and have raised no objections with regards to noise and nuisances, however, in order to minimise the noise arising from ball impacts, they have suggested that washers are fitted between the fence posts and panels of the MUGA. Further information regarding the construction of the MUGA has been provided by the applicant which shows that the panels and posts will be connected by thermoplastic plugs which help reduce vibration and noise. This construction detail can be secured by planning condition.

It has been clarified that no lighting is proposed as part of the MUGA scheme.

## **Trees and Ecology**

To the north of the site beyond the footpath lies an area of mature trees, with Wharrington Brook running through this area. This land has been designated a Special Wildlife site and as such, consideration has been given to the impact of the proposed development on this area in line with Policy 16 of the BoRLP 4. There are no trees to be removed as part of the development proposal and the Council's Tree Officer has confirmed that the proposal raises no tree related issues. Furthermore, given that the trees would not be affected and as the area of land that the MUGA would be sited on is well maintained, short grass, the installation of the MUGA raises no concerns in relation to ecology matters.

## **Public Consultation**

One letter of objection has been received from a neighbour who lives on Wishaw Close, to the east of the proposal site. The letter raised concerns with regards to the potential of the proposal attracting anti-social behaviour and vandalism. As considered above, whilst it is possible that anti-social behaviour takes place at the site in the future, this should be weighed against the social, health and wellbeing benefits of providing a recreational facility in the area. The applicant has demonstrated that the construction of the MUGA is strong and has been designed to prevent crack and breaks and to be resistant to

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vandalism. The associated seating has been reduced to a single bench as the community safety officer advised that this can encourage nuisance loitering.

**Conclusion**

The multi use games area subject to this application would enhance and improve an existing area of POS, which provides a valued leisure facility for the local community. Given that the proposed development would attract a wide range of users, 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:/Reasons for Refusal**

- 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.

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:

Layout and Site Location Details - drawing no. P2232/106/2; Scale 1:1250 and 1:500

Elevations - FRE600101 ID 20195610; Scale 1:100

Floor Plan - FRE600101 ID 20195610; Scale 1:100

Document reference: FRE600201 MUGA, 12x24m, Steel by Kompan

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

- 3) Prior to the first use of the development and in accordance with document reference: FRE600201 MUGA, 12x24m, Steel by Kompan, thermoplastic plugs shall be fitted between each fence panel and post used in the construction of the multi-use games area hereby approved and shall be retained for the life of the development.

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Reason: to minimise the noise impacts and protect nearby residential amenity.

- 4) The remarking of the five vs five grass pitch, as shown on drawing no. P2232/106/2 shall be completed no later three months following the first use of the multi-use games area hereby approved.

Reason: to ensure there are no loss of playing pitches as a result of the development, in accordance with paragraph 99 of the NPPF.

- 5) Prior to its first use, the frame of the multi-use games area hereby approved shall be finished in powder coated paint in colour RAL 6005 green.

Reason: to protect the visual amenity of the area and to ensure that the frame is damage resistant.

**Informative**

The applicant is advised to erect signage on or near the site which provides emergency contact details.

**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.