

SECTION '2' – Applications meriting special consideration

Application No : 15/03511/FULL1

Ward:
**Chelsfield And Pratts
Bottom**

Address : Orpington Sports Club Goddington
Lane Orpington BR6 9SX

OS Grid Ref: E: 547318 N: 164861

Applicant :

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Installation of 4 no. floodlight monopoles (2x 14m and 2x 17.5m) each supporting 4no. lamps, and the 2no. 17.5m molopoles also supporting telecommunications antenna (for shared use by Vodafone and Telefonica), together with installation of 3no. ground based equipment cabinets.
(Location at Westcombe Park Rugby Club pitch)

Key designations:

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Birds
Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area
Green Belt
London City Airport Safeguarding
Sites of Interest for Nat. Conservation
Smoke Control SCA 29
Smoke Control SCA 31

Proposal

The application serves two functions: firstly, in order to provide enhanced indoor and outdoor mobile telecommunications coverage and capacity; and secondly, to support the continued use of "Westcombe Rugby Club" as a Rugby Football Club and as a community facility. The associated technical apparatus on the monopoles will include 6 no panel antennas and 4 no dish antennae. The columns to which the telecommunications equipment will be attached will incorporate a wider diameter of 0.6m at base level and tapering down to 0.3m at the height of 15.4m where the antennas are mounted.

The application is accompanied by a Technical Report and a Planning, Design and Access Statement.

Location

The application site is situated to the east of the A224 Court Road with the main point of access to the site off Goddington Lane. It forms part of a larger complex of

mainly outdoor sports facilities. A 300 seat spectator stand forms part of the site which adjoins the playing pitch. The site falls within the Green Belt.

Consultations

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and representations were received which can be summarised as follows:

- visually intrusive in an otherwise green area
- out of character
- light (illumination) nuisance within a ground which already has three separate areas of floodlights
- floodlights regularly left on overnight and shine into neighbouring residents' homes
- installation of two 17.5m floodlights will be visually intrusive
- a more sensitive alternative location should be utilised
- visually intrusive
- any financial gain for the rugby club should not be treated as a planning justification
- lack of public consultation
- objection if the proposed floodlights were to be used between 10:30pm and 9:00am

Comments from Consultees

No Environmental Health objections raised, subject to conditions restricting the use of the proposed floodlighting to between 09:00 - 21:30 on any day.

Planning Considerations

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the following policies of the Unitary Development Plan and the London Plan:

BE1 Design of New Development
BE22 Telecommunications
G1 The Green Belt
L1 Outdoor Recreation and Leisure

National Planning Policy Framework

London Plan (2015)

Planning History

There are no planning applications directly applicable to this proposal.

Conclusions

The main issues to be considered in this case are the visual impact of the proposal, including in respect of the openness of the Green Belt, the investigation of alternative sites, and its impact on neighbouring amenity.

In the accompanying supporting statement the agent has included justification for the siting of the installation which is required to provide coverage to the surrounding area for both mobile phone operators. The agent has provided documentation to confirm compliance with the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

Policy G1 of the UDP states that openness and visual amenity shall not be injured by any proposals for development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt which might be visually detrimental by reason of scale, siting, materials or design. In terms of national policy, the NPPF notes at Paragraph 87 that "as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances".

In this case it is noted that the scheme will entail the erection of four monopoles, the two 14m-high structures will be used exclusively for floodlighting, and the remaining two will each incorporate telecommunications antennas and will be 17.5m high in order to incorporate this apparatus. Whilst each of these columns will incorporate floodlighting, those which will incorporate the antennas will necessarily be larger in order to accommodate this equipment. From a visual perspective, these higher columns will be particularly dominant within their surroundings, incorporating as they do a diameter of 0.6m at ground level, whilst their upper sections will comprise of antennae. Given their height and massing, it is considered that these columns will appear extremely conspicuous within their surroundings, and that the overall impact of this development will be accentuated as a result of the cumulative development proposed, in terms of column numbers and equipment at ground floor level. As such, it is important to assess any potential very special circumstances which might exist to justify this proposal.

Five very special circumstances have been cited in support of this proposal. These are: the benefit to an existing community sports facility; innovative design; improvement in coverage over a range of technologies; improved network coverage; and a demonstration of no viable alternative sites to provide the facility. Although it is accepted that this proposal will enhance the existing sports facility, in terms of enabling longer use of the site, it is likely that a less intensive form of development could be undertaken which would achieve the same objective. Furthermore, whilst enhanced mobile coverage would be of benefit, on balance it is considered that this would fail to outweigh the harm arising out of this proposal as a result of its adverse effect on openness and visual amenity, and inappropriate in the Green Belt.

In summary it is considered that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt which would harm its openness and visual amenity, and that no very special circumstances have been demonstrated that might justify the grant of planning permission as an exception to established Green Belt policy.

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on the file refs set out in the Planning History section above, excluding exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: APPLICATION BE REFUSED

The reasons for refusal are:

The proposal, by reason of its height and massing, would undermine the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and in the absence of very special circumstances to justify otherwise, constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt, contrary Policy G1 of the Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.