



## ITEM 04

### COMMITTEE REPORT

**Reference:**  
17/00432/FUL

**Site:**  
Navestock Village Hall  
Navestock Side  
Navestock  
Essex  
CM14 5SD

**Ward:**  
Brizes & Doddinghurst

**Proposal:**  
Construction of indoor sports facility and pavilion including changing rooms for the outdoor sports using the field to complement the existing village hall.

**Parish:**  
Navestock

**Plan Number(s):**  
35036; SITE PLAN; 35038; 35037;

**Applicant:**  
Mr C Kitlay (Clerk)

**Case Officer:** Mr Nick Howard

**The application has been called in by Councillor Parker on the grounds the facility will give considerable benefit to the village and the younger generation and as the field it is on is already a sports facility.**

#### 1.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The proposal is for an indoor sports building and would have the appearance of a portal framed industrial style building. The building would be 37 metres by 18 metres with a ridge height of 7.3 metres. The building would be clad composite roof panels with the roof finished in terracotta and the walls in slate blue. No indication is shown on the drawing to indicate the access or parking provision. However, the village hall with its associated parking is adjacent to the site.

## **2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site comprises an existing sports field located between Navestock Side, Royds lane and Green Lane. The application site for the proposed building is in the southern corner of the sports field to the north of the existing village hall. The plan shows the building to be about 7 metres from the belt of trees alongside Green lane, about 10 metres north of the village hall and about 75 metres from Navestock Side which is the main road through the hamlet.

## **3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY**

- 16/00972/FUL: Construction of indoor sports facility and pavilion including changing rooms for the outdoor sports using the field to complement the existing village hall. -Application Refused

## **4.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

Detailed below is a summary of the consultation responses, if any received. The full version of each consultation response can be viewed on the Council's website via Public Access at the following link: <http://publicaccess.brentwood.gov.uk/online-applications/>

- **Sport England-**

Summary: Sport England raises no objection to this application which is considered to meet exception E5 of our adopted Playing Fields Policy. A condition is requested to be imposed on any planning permission relating to the design specifications for the proposed sports facility. Sport England is supportive of the principle of the new sports facility as a non-statutory consultee.

## **5.0 SUMMARY OF NEIGHBOUR COMMENTS**

This application has been advertised by way of individual neighbour notification letters, press advert and public site notice which has been displayed nearby. The full version of each neighbour response can be viewed on the Council's website via Public Access at the following link: <http://publicaccess.brentwood.gov.uk/online-applications/>

41 letters of objection have been received on the grounds:

- The proposal is inappropriate development in the green belt
- Site is in an unsustainable location
- No consultation has been carried out
- Building is very large,
- Lack of car parking
- Site not a cricket pitch
- Poor access and site floods.

## **6.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

The starting point for determining an application is the development plan, in this instance, the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (RLP) 2005. Applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Relevant material considerations for determining this application are the following RLP policies, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) 2014.

RLP Policy: CP1 General Development Criteria.  
GB1 & GB2 development in the Green Belt

NPPF Sections: Paragraph 89

Local Development Plan:

The Local Development Plan is currently at the Draft Stage (Regulation 18) and as there are outstanding objections to be resolved, only limited weight can be given to it in terms of decision making, as set out in paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework. As the plan advances and objections become resolved, more weight can be applied to the policies within it. Nevertheless, the draft Local Plan provides a good indication of the direction of travel in terms of aspirations for growth in the Borough and where development is likely to come forward through draft housing and employment allocations. The next stage of the Local Plan is the Pre-Submission Draft (Regulation 19) which is currently anticipated to be published in 2017. Following this, the Draft LDP will be submitted to the Secretary of State for an Examination in Public. Provided the Inspector finds the plan to be sound it is estimated that it could be adopted in 2018.

## **7.0 ASSESSMENT**

The applicant has submitted supporting information to indicate that the building would provide facilities to train and play during off-seasons. Attention is drawn to the demand for cricket clubs for indoor facilities and that the proposed building would be able to accommodate three nets. It is indicated that the building would be used for a spectrum of sports including cycling, badminton, netball, hockey for the able-bodied and those with disabilities. It is indicated that local school facilities are oversubscribed and that the proposed facility would go some way to fulfilling a local need. The proposed building would also provide a function space for events that are too large for the adjacent village hall.

The application is supported by pro-forma and individual letters which the Parish Council indicates have been signed by the occupiers of 132 of the 158 households in the Parish. A further 50 are indicated to have been signed by residents of surrounding areas who support the facility.

In response to the planning application: - There are 41 letters of objection on the grounds the proposal is inappropriate development in the green belt, site is in an unsustainable location, no consultation, building is very large, lack of car parking, site not a cricket pitch, poor access and site floods.

The site lies in the Green Belt and the main issues are the principle of the development in the Green Belt and its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

### Green Belt - inappropriate development

The National Policy for Green Belts appears in Part 9 "Protecting Green Belt Land" of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework indicates that openness is one of the essential characteristics of Green Belts and paragraph 80 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt. The Framework indicates that local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial uses of the Green Belt such as looking for opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation.

The Framework indicates that within Green Belts inappropriate development is harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. With a few exceptions, the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development. These exceptions are set out in Paragraph 89 of the Framework. The second bullet point in Paragraph 89 of the Framework indicates that the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation is not "inappropriate development" as long as the openness of the Green Belt is preserved and that the proposal does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

Although adopted some years before the Framework the aims of the general Green Belt Policies (GB1 and GB2) within the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (RLP) are consistent with those of the Framework and therefore they still carry significant weight.

The changing rooms and the machine store may support the use of the playing fields for outdoor sport and recreation, however that function does not require the provision of the sports hall. It is considered that a building of this size cannot be regarded as necessary to provide appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. The building would have a very significant adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt and would be an encroachment of development into the countryside. The proposal would therefore not accord with the criteria of the second bullet point of paragraph 89 of the Framework.

The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt that would materially detract from openness and conflict with one of the purposes of the Green Belt. Therefore very special circumstances need to be demonstrated. The applicant's supporting notes collectively do not form very special circumstances.

## Other harm

The application site lies in partly-wooded countryside clearly beyond the built-up part of the village. The countryside in this area performs an important role in containing the urban areas and maintaining an attractive environment around those areas. The area is crossed by narrow lanes which are mostly bordered by hedges and trees, but these do not prevent views through to the land beyond, especially for the half of the year when the deciduous trees are not in leaf.

In the landscape character assessment for Brentwood (Chris Blandford Associates 2006) (the LCA) the application site is within the F15 Weald Wooded Farmland. The key characteristics are identified as relatively open commons, wooded rolling hills and slopes and narrow, tree-lined roads. The suggested landscape planning guidelines are "Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of small settlements. Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape. Conserve the mostly rural character of the area". The character of the immediate area within which the development is proposed resonates with the LCA and whilst the LCA cannot be afforded great weight in the decision-making process it is helpful in identifying the key issues for the countryside in this area.

The proposal is referred to by the applicant as a "small local indoor sports facility". The term "small" is a matter of judgment and opinion, but it is considered that in the context of a rural area such as Navestock a building of 40m in length by 24m wide with a height of 7.5m cannot reasonably be described as "small". The proposed building would have the appearance of an industrial unit and would have no affinity with the design, scale or appearance of nearby buildings. The building would represent a significant encroachment of built development into the countryside. It would be clearly visible from Navestockside and Green Lane and from the nearby playing fields and parking area associated with the village hall. The proposal is not accompanied by a specific landscape character assessment but based on the size of the building and its location at the top of rising land it is likely to be visible in more distant views from the west/north west including the footpaths alongside and across the fields to the west.

In summary, it is considered that the building would be an intrusive and incongruous presence in the countryside that would materially detract from the character and appearance of the area.

The proposal would conflict with RLP Policy CP1 (i) and one of the core planning principles set out in the Framework which indicates that planning should take account of the different roles and characters of different areas and that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised. Paragraph 109 of the Framework indicates that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The Framework does not define "valued" but given that paragraph 115 refers to nationally designated land it is considered that the value of local environment (as referred to in paragraph 109) is a matter for local people and their representatives to determine. The application site lies within an area defined as a Special Landscape Area in the RLP. This designation in itself now carries limited weight; however, it is indicative of this being a valued landscape which should be afforded some protection.

#### Sustainability of location

The underlying objective of the Framework is the promotion of sustainable development. Paragraph 35 of the Framework indicates that developments should be located to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and should have access to high quality public transport facilities. It is accepted that some facilities need to be located in rural areas where access to them is likely to be difficult to be achieved by public transport and where for any but the shortest distances the highway network is not conducive to walking and cycling.

The application is not accompanied by any assessment of its effects on traffic in the area. However, the proposed building would serve a larger area than the village resulting in additional traffic on the nearby road network which includes narrow, winding and unlit lanes. It is considered that it would be likely to attract users from settlements nearby which are locationally more sustainable. It is considered undesirable to develop a facility that would potentially attract significant numbers of people to this unsustainable location. Furthermore, Navestock Side is not a defined village/settlement in the Local Plan.

#### Access and parking

The application provides no information about the access to the proposal and it is therefore assumed that vehicles would use the existing access to the partly-metalled access way from Navestockside. This access has limited visibility to the north when exiting the site, however the highways authority raised no objection on the previous application and on that basis, it is considered that a refusal of permission on highway safety grounds cannot be justified.

The application form indicates that parking space is available for 120 cars but there is no indication of the basis for this figure. The gravel parking area at the front of the village hall is about 70m by 20m which, based on standard parking spaces, could accommodate two rows of 24 spaces - 48 in total. The area is unmarked and alternative configurations would be likely to create more spaces it is therefore likely that the area would accommodate more than 50 spaces. However, it would not provide 120 spaces. In order to achieve the numbers indicated by the applicant it would be necessary to park on the grassed areas of the sports fields.

The adopted standard for sports halls indicates a need for a maximum of one space for every 10 sq m of public area. In this location, it is considered that a relatively small proportion of users would employ public transport and that 1 space for 10 sq m would be a reasonable requirement. Excluding the small lobby the proposed building would have an area of about 890 sq m which would generate a need for 89 spaces.

Those spaces could not be accommodated within the existing parking area at the front of the village hall and it should be born in mind that use of the village hall and playing pitches would generate additional demands for parking. It is accepted that the grassed areas could provide space for a considerable amount of overspill parking however the application provides no indication of how this would be achieved or managed.

Had this report recommended the granting of permission it would have been necessary for the full implications of the provision of adequate parking to have been demonstrated and the effects of that provision to have been considered.

### Living conditions

The proposal would result in a concentration of activity in the vicinity of the sports hall/village hall including an increase in activity into the evenings with associated increases in vehicle-related noise and disturbance. However, the sports hall would be remote from residential properties and it is considered that the living conditions of residents would not be unacceptably harmed by the proposal.

### Sport England

Sport England support the proposal, however this support has to be set against the issues raised above and are discussed below.

### Other considerations and Green Belt Balance

As indicated above the Framework encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation in Green Belts but this encouragement does not extend to the development of buildings in the Green Belt for indoor recreation.

Any sports hall would create opportunities for additional participation in sport and in that respect encouragement should be given to the principle of additional facilities. The applicant indicates that there is a need for additional facilities in the area but there is no evidence to support the need for a facility of this size in this location. Even if such a need was demonstrated it is questionable whether the application site would be the most appropriate and sustainable location for its provision. Sport England support the proposal; however, the proposal would be inappropriate development that would significantly detract from openness and represent an encroachment of development into the countryside. The proposal would be in an unsustainable location. It would fail to reflect the role of this area and would detract from the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The proposal would therefore conflict with RLP Policies CP1, GB1 and GB2 and the objectives of the Framework as regards development in the Green Belt and the protection of the countryside.

The benefits of having a facility of the nature proposed are acknowledged; however, it is considered that those benefits would not be sufficient clearly to outweigh the substantial weight that must be given to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and the other harms identified.

The applicant indicates that consideration has been given to pursuing the proposal under the provisions of the "Community Right to Build" in the Localism Act 2011. This came into force on 6 April 2012 and allows local communities to propose small-scale, site-specific, community-led developments. Appendix 1 of the DCLG Policy Paper (updated 8 May 2015) indicates that to get the go-ahead, a proposal must meet some minimum requirements (for example, it should generally be in line with national planning policies and strategic elements of the local plan). It is not the purpose of this report to comment on the merits of a possible Right to Build proposal but the conflict with national and local planning policies inherent in the proposed development may exclude it from that procedure.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would detract from the role and intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The proposal would be likely to attract users from settlements nearby which are locationally more sustainable. It is considered undesirable to develop a facility that would potentially attract significant numbers of people to this unsustainable location which would result in a high dependency on private cars with limited opportunities for alternative means of transport. The proposal would therefore not satisfy the fundamental Framework objective of locationally sustainable development.



The other matters considered above, including those advanced by the applicant in support of the proposal, have been considered but it is concluded that collectively they do not clearly outweigh the substantial harm caused to the Green Belt by inappropriate development and the other harms identified. Therefore, very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist.

For all of these reasons the proposal would be fundamentally at odds with the Framework and the benefits arising from it would be significantly outweighed by adverse impacts. It is therefore recommended that the application should be refused.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATION**

The Application be REFUSED for the following reasons:-

1. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt that would materially detract from openness and would represent an encroachment of development into the countryside. It would therefore conflict with RLP Policies GB1 and GB2 and the objectives of the Framework as regards development in the Green Belt.
2. As a result of the size, design and appearance of the proposed building the proposal would unacceptably detract from the role and intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It would conflict with RLP Policy CP1 and with one of the core planning principles of the Framework which indicates that planning should take account of the different roles and character of different areas and recognize the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
3. The proposed sports hall would be likely to attract users from settlements nearby which are locationally more sustainable. It is considered undesirable to develop a facility that would potentially attract significant numbers of people to this unsustainable location which would result in a high dependency on private cars with limited opportunities for alternative means of transport. The proposal would therefore not satisfy the underlying objective of the Framework as regards sustainable development.
4. Other matters that may weigh in favour of the proposal have been considered but collectively they do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or the other harms identified. Therefore, very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt do not exist.

### Informative(s)

1. The following development plan policies contained in the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan 2005 are relevant to this decision: GB1, GB2,& CP1; the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and NPPG 2014.

2. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern with the proposal and clearly identifying within the grounds of refusal either the defective principle of development or the significant and demonstrable harm it would cause. The issues identified are so fundamental to the proposal that based on the information submitted with the application, the Local Planning Authority do not consider a negotiable position is possible at this time.
  
3. The drawing numbers listed above are relevant to this decision

**Documents:**

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online:

[www.brentwood.gov.uk/planning](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/planning)