



Report to South Area Planning Committee

Application Number:	PL/22/1114/FA
Proposal:	Retrospective application to erect a detached building to be used as a tournament control centre in connection with the existing BaseballSoftball UK complex
Site location:	Farnham Park Playing Fields Beaconsfield Road Farnham Royal Buckinghamshire SL2 3BP
Applicant:	BaseballSoftballUk
Case Officer:	Kaya Allnutt
Ward affected:	Stoke Poges & Wexham
Parish-Town Council:	Farnham Royal Parish Council
Valid date:	16 December 2022
Determination date:	31 August 2023
Recommendation:	Conditional permission

1.0 Summary & Recommendation/ Reason for Planning Committee Consideration

- 1.1 This is a retrospective application for the erection of a detached building to be used as a Tournament Control Centre in conjunction with the existing Baseball and Softball facilities on site at Farnham Park Playing Fields.
- 1.2 The application site falls on land owned and managed by Buckinghamshire Council and the application is therefore required to be determined by the Planning Committee.
- 1.3 Recommendation - Conditional Permission.

2.0 Description of Proposed Development

- 2.1 The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the erection of a detached building to provide a tournament control centre for the existing sports facilities run by BaseballSoftballUK (BSUK). The building will be used to accommodate pre and post tournament meetings, events management, storage and distribution of playing equipment, ad-hoc physiotherapy treatment room, officials and first aid hub and media control centre. The building measures 9.1 metres (width) x 6.096 metres (depth) x 2.8 metres (height). An external staircase provides access to the roof platform for employees only for maintenance and broadcasting during games.

- 2.2 The application is accompanied by:
- a) Cover Letter
 - b) Supporting Statement from Applicant
 - c) Site Plan
 - d) Building Plan
 - e) Sections
 - f) Ecology Report

3.0 Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 11/02003/FUL - Provision of one baseball and four softball pitches with ancillary facilities including fencing and dugouts. Conditional Permission 16.02.2012
- 3.2 15/01407/FUL - Provision of 1 Baseball Diamond and 1 Softball Diamond with Ancillary Facilities and Associated Infrastructure (fencing, player shelters, bullpens, batting cages) and Change of Use for on-site bungalow from a Dwelling (Class C3) to a Clubhouse. Conditional Permission 12.11.2015
- 3.3 PL/21/0338/FA - Replacement of existing grass/clay baseball/softball pitch with synthetic surface. Withdrawn 01.11.2021

4.0 Policy Considerations and Evaluation

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2021.
- Planning Practice Guidance
- South Bucks Core Strategy Development Plan Document - Adopted February 2011
- South Bucks District Local Plan - Adopted March 1999 Consolidated September 2007 and February 2011
- Chiltern and South Bucks Townscape Character Study 2017

Principle and Location of Development

Core Strategy Policies:

CP5 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation)

CP9 (Natural Environment)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

GB1 (Green Belt boundaries and the control over development in the Green Belt)

- 4.1 The NPPF was revised on 20th July 2021 and whilst this replaced the previous Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes, it does not replace existing local policies that form part of the development plan. It does state however, that the weight that should be given to these existing local policies and plans will be dependent on their degree of consistency with the NPPF. Therefore, the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to them.
- 4.2 The site falls within the Green Belt where the types of development that are deemed acceptable are very limited. Policy GB1 of the Local Plan, together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out the types of development that are deemed acceptable. Where there is a conflict, then the NPPF takes precedence.

Impact upon the Green Belt

Core Strategy Policies:

CP5 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation)

CP9 (Natural Environment)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

GB1 (Green Belt boundaries and the control over development in the Green Belt)

- 4.3 The NPPF under Section 13 advises at paragraph 137 that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open: the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 4.4 Paragraph 149 states that built development must normally be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, with certain exceptions. Among this closed list of exceptions, (b) allows for 'the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'.
- 4.5 Local Plan policy GB1 further provides a closed list of exceptions wherein certain forms of development may be deemed acceptable. Among the exceptions it advises that new buildings for essential facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and outdoor leisure may be permissible in the Green Belt. The wording within LP policy GB1 is more stringent than that of the exception set out under 149 (b) and given the age of this policy, the NPPF takes precedence in this instance.
- 4.6 The site subject of this application falls within the larger Farnham Park Playing Fields which provides facilities for multiple outdoor sports and recreation. The area subject of this application comprises facilities for a national Baseball and Softball complex run by BaseballSoftballUK (BSUK) and includes the provision of a number of playing pitches, access to communal changing room facilities and access to the clubhouse. The clubhouse is dominated by the existing café/ bar at ground floor and associated café/ bar storage at first floor. BSUK was previously operating tournaments and training from a single room within the first floor of the clubhouse building however this has become inadequate due to the increasing demands of the clubs and events organised and run by BSUK onsite.
- 4.7 The development subject of this application seeks retrospective permission for a detached building to be used as a tournament control centre. During the course of the application discussions were held with the applicant to clarify the proposed use of the building and its connection to the existing use of the site for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation. The applicant provided supporting information detailing the proposed uses which are noted above. The applicant has further confirmed that the building will not be used at any time as a 'head office' facility and will not enable any provision for permanent staff onsite.
- 4.8 When assessing the proposal against the relevant Green Belt policies, it is considered that the building would consist of an appropriate facility for outdoor sport as required by paragraph 149 (b) of the NPPF and would furthermore be considered to comply with LP policy GB1. When considering the limited existing facilities on site used by BSUK to operate the associated outdoor sports, the building would be considered to provide an improved and appropriate space for its use as a tournament control centre for BSUK.

- 4.9 In regard to openness, the building is located adjacent to the existing baseball and softball pitches and is positioned such that it would be viewed in the context of the existing built form given its close proximity to the existing buildings onsite. By virtue of its limited size, scale and siting, the building is not considered to comprise a visually dominant feature within the landscape or locality in general and the development is not considered to result in detrimental harm to the openness of the Green Belt in this instance. In addition to this, the proposed development is not considered to conflict with the 5 purposes of the Green Belt as set out under paragraph 138 of the NPPF.
- 4.10 The development would therefore meet with the exception set out in paragraphs 149(b) of the NPPF and comply with policy GB1 of the South Bucks District Local Plan (adopted March 1999).

Design/ character & appearance

Core Strategy Policies:

CP8 (Built and historic environment)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

EP3 (The Use, Design and Layout of Development)

- 4.11 Given the limited size, scale and height of the building, combined with its siting adjacent to the existing built form, it is considered that it would not appear over dominant or obtrusive within the site or locality in general, nor would it adversely affect the character or appearance of the area.

Amenity of existing and future residents

Local Plan Saved Policies:

EP3 (The use, design and layout of development)

- 4.12 Given the distance retained to the nearest neighbouring residential properties, along with the scale and nature of the building it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts on the amenities of the adjacent properties in terms of loss of light, loss of privacy or overdominance.
- 4.13 The development is not considered to result in any increase in noise or disturbance that would have a detrimental impact upon the surrounding properties.

Parking/Highway implications

Local Plan Saved Policies:

TR5 (Accesses, Highway Works and Traffic Generation)

TR7 (Parking Provision)

- 4.14 The development serves the existing sporting facilities onsite and would not lead to any increase in parking provision or highway implications.

5.0 Weighing and balancing of issues / Overall Assessment

- 5.1 In determining the planning application, section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In addition, Section 143 of the Localism Act amends Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act relating to the determination of planning applications and states that in dealing with planning applications, the authority shall have regard to:
- a. Provision of the development plan insofar as they are material,

- b. Any local finance considerations, so far as they are material to the application (such as CIL if applicable), and,
 - c. Any other material considerations
- 5.2 As set out above it is considered that the proposed development would accord with Policies GB1, EP3, TR5 and TR7 of the South Bucks District Local Plan (adopted March 1999), Policies CP5, CP8 and CP9 of the South Bucks District Core Strategy (adopted February 2011) and the aims set out under the NPPF.

6.0 Working with the applicant / agent

- 6.1 In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF (2021) the Council approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments.
- 6.2 The Council work with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications / agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.
- 6.3 Clarification was sought during the course of the application in regard to the proposed uses of the building given its siting within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The applicant provided supporting information including a detailed account of the proposed uses.
- 6.4 In this instance
 - the applicant/agent was updated of any issues after the initial site visit,
 - The applicant was provided the opportunity to submit amendments to the scheme/address issues.
 - The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the application.

7.0 Recommendation: Conditional Permission. Subject to the following conditions:

- 1. The development to which this planning permission relates shall be undertaken solely in accordance with the following drawings:

List of approved plans:

<u>Received</u>	<u>Plan Reference</u>
23 Sep 2022	004 A
23 Sep 2022	002
23 Sep 2022	003
16 Sep 2022	001 A

APPENDIX A: Consultation Responses and Representations

Councillor Comments

None received.

Parish/Town Council Comments

Parish Council response received 18th January 2023 – The Parish Council believes that the proposed building will be sited within the green belt and as such objects to the application as inappropriate development. Moving the organisation's head office into the proposed building implies this will be a permanent arrangement and councillors have been advised that commercial activities are also very likely to take place within the building. All options to obtain this type of facility not on the green belt must be fully explored and the Parish Council considers there are options for a head office close by and not on the green belt.

Further Parish Council response received 5th May 2023 – The Parish Council notes the argument put forward by the applicant but stands by its previous objection as it is in the green belt and there are other options available on site without this property.

Consultation Responses

None received/ relevant.

Representations

None received.