

From: Roy Warren [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 September 2022 09:16
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Application Ref: S62A/22/0000002 - Former Friends School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3EB

Dear Sir/Madam

Application Ref: S62A/22/0000002 - Former Friends School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3EB (Sport England Ref: PA/22/E/UT/61571)

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the additional information and plans that have been submitted by the applicant in relation to the above Section 62A planning application. I would wish to make the following comments on the matters relating to playing field considerations:

- *Playing Field Area Impact:* The applicant's submission focuses on querying the extent of the playing field area that would be lost to the development by comparing the 'Playing Field' policy designation boundary on the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan Proposals Map with the extent of the area lost to the proposed development. However, the area covered by the 'Playing Field' policy designation on the Proposals Map does not cover the full extent of the playing field area on the ground. When assessing playing field impact consideration needs to be given to the impact on the use of the playing field area affected by the development, not just the area that falls within a historic planning policy designation that does not reflect the extent of the playing field area on the ground. It is acknowledged that the Local Plan 'Playing Field' designation does not include part of the playing field area that was used as part of the cricket pitch outfield (the north west corner of it) but in practice this forms part of the playing field that can be used for marking out playing pitches and did so for many years before the school closed. When assessing the proposal against paragraph 99 of the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy there is no requirement to limit playing field impact considerations to areas designated within historic local plan designations especially as in this case the boundary of the designation does not reflect the actual boundary of the playing field on the ground. As shown by the application plans, the access road and car parking associated with the swimming pool would clearly encroach onto the playing field (both within and outside the Local Plan designation boundary) and have an impact on prejudicing the potential to accommodate a cricket pitch in this area. Our position is therefore maintained that the actual quantitative impact would be around 0.15 ha rather than 0.0497 hectares suggested by the applicant. The offer to use the narrow strips of proposed landscaping to the rear of the proposed Ash Houses and the swimming pool car parking for playing field use would only have a negligible benefit in terms of mitigating the impact and would not compensate for prejudicing the use of the cricket pitch area. There would still be a clear net loss in playing field area that is not proposed to be mitigated.

The applicant's recent submission also fails to mention that the proposal would still result in the loss of the pavilion, the sports hall and the car parking that support the use of the playing field for community use. While a small part of the car parking that falls within the 'Playing Field' policy designation has now been offered to be converted to playing field use this does not address the issue that the parking is ancillary to the use of the playing field and needs to be retained/replaced to allow the playing field to be brought back into use by the community. Furthermore, some of the ancillary playing field facilities that would be lost as part of the current proposal

such as the pavilion and the hard surfaced tennis courts fall within the area designated as Playing Field in the adopted Local Plan and their loss would not be mitigated.

- *Relocated Cricket Pitch:* The applicant has produced a drawing which shows how a cricket pitch could still be accommodated on the remaining playing field if the development was implemented as proposed. However, the drawing only shows a single cricket wicket. The playing field previously accommodated a 9 wicket square (this is the standard size for a community cricket square) and it would need to be demonstrated that a 9 wicket square with the associated ECB compliant outfield could still be maintained if the square was relocated as a cricket facility would only be fit for purpose for potential community use if 9 wickets were provided due to the need to alternate the use of wickets throughout the cricket season to allow recovery time. All 9 wickets would need to be designed to have a minimum distance of 45.72m to the outfield boundary as shown on the attached ECB layout plus a further 2.74 metre minimum unobstructed run-off area. This would require additional space compared to a single wicket and it is therefore uncertain whether this could be delivered in the space available. The drawing does not demonstrate this so it is not possible to provide informed advice on whether the cricket pitch could be satisfactory relocated in practice. Even if could be demonstrated that the cricket pitch could be satisfactorily relocated this would not address the net loss of playing field area or the loss of the ancillary facilities.

In conclusion I can advise that the information provided by the applicant does not show that the impact on the playing field would be substantively reduced and would not address the main issues set out in our previous formal responses made as a statutory consultee namely the net loss of playing field area, the prejudicing of the cricket pitch and the loss of the ancillary facilities (pavilion, sports hall and car parking) which supported community use of the playing field. I can therefore confirm that Sport England's **objection** to the application as a statutory consultee is maintained and would recommend that the additional information that has been submitted is not given weight when determining the planning application.

If you would like any further information or advice please contact me.

Yours faithfully

Roy Warren
Planning Manager

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