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Sent: Tuesday, September 17, 2024 12:42 PM
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Comment on S62A/2024/0057

Comment on S62A/2024/0057 (Chase Homes @ former Friends School) submitted by Saffron Walden Cricket Club (SWCC)

SWCC used the Friends School site for 3rd, 4th, and 5th XI cricket as well as junior cricket until the site was closed in 2017. Up until then the bookings were made via the school and the ground was maintained by the school. Whilst the field may have been accessible, the lack of maintenance since 2017 has rendered use of the cricket square unsafe.

The cricket square had 11 strips which enabled use from end of April until end of August. The club also had use of adequate car parking and a small but ageing pavilion which was not appropriate for people, especially young people, to change in. There were also outdoor and indoor net practice facilities. The indoor facility was very important to us as it has a hard floor rather than a sprung floor. We now have to travel to the edge of Bishops Stortford for such an indoor facility.

The accessibility of the site to the town was a significant advantage particularly in terms of attracting young people and their parents. It was a key part of our ability to grow the game at a junior level.

That facility has been removed and the proposed new facility falls far short of what is needed. The following points are also relevant ;

1. The plan proposes two cricket pitches or strips. This would enable adult cricket to be played for 4, maybe 6 weeks , as opposed to 16 weeks which is the usual length of the adult cricket season. Two strips is a significant reduction on the 11 strips which were previously available. In our view a minimum of 8 strips are required if we are to regain what was lost although we note that the England and Wales Cricket Board believe a minimum of 6 strips are needed. This assumes that the strips would be well-maintained but the proposal makes no reference to how such maintenance will take place.
2. There seems to be no provision in the design to protect residential properties from ball-strike
3. The pavilion, whilst impressive and an improvement on what was there before, is out of proportion to the facilities being proposed - two small football pitches and two cricket strips. Given the unsuitability of the proposal for both football and cricket, it is likely that the pavilion would not be used for its intended purpose.

The loss that cricket suffered in 2017 is not recovered by this proposal. It is clear that the proposal is not based on any expert consultation and that what is proposed is not fit for purpose.

The cricket club would consider other sites given that this proposal doesn't seem to have the capacity to replace what we have lost. One particular consideration might be to create an indoor facility containing practice facilities for cricket (and other sports) given that there are few, if any, options for the replacement of a cricket field with an appropriately sized square. In this context , we would expect Section 106 or Section 106 + CIL funds to be made available to compensate for what is a significant loss of sports facilities in the town both in terms of quantity and quality.

David Barrs (Chairman; SWCC)