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Planning Development

Planning Statement: Huddersfield Dragons Hockey Club, Storthes Hall Lane, Kirkburton, Huddersfield, HD8 0WA

Introduction

The Leslie Sports Foundation was formed in 2011 and is the registered not-for profit charity that owns the Storthes Hall sports facility and Shelley Community Football Club. The Foundation's objective is to facilitate and promote participative sport within the Kirklees community for all age groups.

The number of participants using the sporting facilities at Storthes Hall in recent years has grown, particularly amongst female participants. The facility is currently home to 300 juniors and 150 adults, encompassing Shelley Community Football Club, Huddersfield Town Women's Football Club, Huddersfield University, Huddersfield Dragons Hockey Club, and Kirkburton Cougars RLC.

There is a need to provide suitable on-site changing and toilet facilities, and grant funding is available within a short window of time for such facilities. The changing rooms would provide essential facilities, particularly for children and young people, supporting safeguarding and encouraging future participants to use the sports facility.



Location of Proposed Changing Rooms (replacing the existing structure)

Site Description

The application site is located directly south-east of the former Storthes Hall Park student village. Access to the site is via the one-way internal access road through Storthes Hall Park from Storthes Hall Lane. The application site comprises one all-weather pitch, turning and parking area and two storage containers. The site is located within a rural area with woodland surrounding large areas of the wider site.

Planning History

There is no known recent planning applications associated with the site.

Policy Designation

The application site is located within the Green Belt in accordance with the Kirklees Local Plan Policies Map. The site is also within the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network and adjacent to the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network.

The Proposals

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of changing rooms adjacent to the 3G sports pitches, primarily aimed at the hockey participants. Given these pitches are some distance away from the existing clubhouse area, the facilities are needed specifically in this location.

The proposed modular style facility would comprise two units each measuring 2.4 metres (w) by 7.9 metres (l) separated by a 0.5 metre service gap closed with steel infill panels. The roof of the facility would be flat. The exterior of the facility would be timber clad with a Moss Green Ral 6005 finish. Two high level windows are proposed on the north-western side and south-eastern side elevations with two entrance doors proposed on the front / south-western elevation. Internally, the facility would include two changing rooms with shower and toilet facilities.

The proposed building would be located on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the north-western corner of the all-weather pitch and the existing access road and turning head.

Assessment of the Proposals

Green Belt Impact

Paragraph 154 in the NPPF states:

'A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of the 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.'

Local Plan Policy LP56 goes on to state that, *'Proposals should ensure that:*

- a. *The scale of the facility is no more than is reasonably required for the proper functioning of the enterprise or the use of the land to which it is associated;*
- b. *The facility is unobtrusively located and designed so as not to introduce a prominent urban element into a countryside location, including the impact of any new or improved access and car parking areas.'*

The application site is an existing multi-sports sports facility. The proposed development comprises the provision of appropriate facilities i.e. changing rooms also encompassing toilet / shower facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. As such, the proposals are considered to be acceptable in principle in the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 154 in the NPPF.

Referring to Local Plan Policy LP56, the proposed changing rooms are relatively small in scale, measuring 5.3m x 7.9m. The development is therefore considered to be no larger than is reasonably required for the proper functioning of the hockey club in particular.

The facility would be located on an existing area of hardstanding adjacent to the existing access road, turning head and all-weather pitch. As such, the development would not cause any further encroachment into the Green Belt.

The design of the facility, including the materials (timber cladding) would also enable the development to blend in with the character and appearance of its rural / woodland surroundings and would not result in a prominent feature. No new access or parking areas are proposed as part of the proposals.

Given the above, it is considered the proposals would preserve openness of the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 154 in the NPPF and Local Plan Policy LP56 and as such are considered to be acceptable.

Design and Visual Amenity

Local Plan Policy LP24 states:

'Proposals should promote good design by ensuring: a. the form, scale, layout and details of all development respects and enhances the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape.'

Paragraph 135 in the NPPF also sets out various design objectives, including the need to ensure that developments: function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive; are sympathetic to local character; and establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

The proposed development with regard to form, scale, layout and materials would respect the character of the local rural landscape. The facility comprises a relatively simple design, to include private changing rooms and shower and toilet facilities. The development would replace one existing storage container, and as such, the proposals would also enhance the overall appearance of the site from a visual perspective.

The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with Local Plan Policy LP24 and paragraph 135 in the NPPF.

Trees

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been carried out by Woodsage Consulting Ltd and accompanies the application. Key points to note are as follows:

- The site survey identified a total of eight trees with the potential to be impacted by the development proposals.
- The trees identified include one category A tree, five category B trees and two category C trees.
- The development proposals do not require the removal of any trees.
- One category A tree and one category C tree will require minor pruning in order to facilitate the construction process.
- The root protection areas of the retained trees can be suitably protected throughout the development process by temporary tree protection fencing.

The report concludes by stating that, 'the development is considered achievable, with minimal impact in arboricultural terms.' The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable and in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP33.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Certain types of development are exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements. This includes a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m x 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

The Government guidance states that a development 'impacts' a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value.¹

The proposed modular changing facility would be located on an existing area of hardstanding. The proposed development would therefore not impact any on-site habitats or decrease the biodiversity value of the site.

The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable with regard to the biodiversity net gain requirements and accords with Local Plan Policy LP30 and the sims of Chapter 15 in the NPPF.

Other Matters

Access and Parking

Access to the site is via the one-way internal access road through Storthes Hall Park from Storthes Hall Lane. Participants and spectators currently park along the internal access road. There are no plans to alter the existing access and car parking arrangements.

The proposals are considered to accord with Local Plan Policies LP21 and LP22.

Climate Change

A Climate Change Statement is submitted as part of the application. The following climate change mitigation measures form part of the development proposals:

- Good levels of insulation
- Use of sustainable materials

¹ Understanding Biodiversity Net Gain

- Low energy lighting
- Low energy consumption fixtures and fittings

The proposals would therefore have a positive impact on climate change and accords with Local Plan Policy LP24.

Conclusion

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of changing rooms incorporating toilets and showers.

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this report, the proposals are considered to represent appropriate development in the Green Belt which would preserve openness. The proposals are also considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity, trees, biodiversity, highway safety, drainage and climate change mitigation.

It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is approved accordingly.

Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyors & Town Planners

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