

Planning Committee

20 June 2019

Reference:
APP/19/00308

Area Team:
Development
Management Team

Case Officer:
Mr B Pratley

Ward:
Clatterbridge

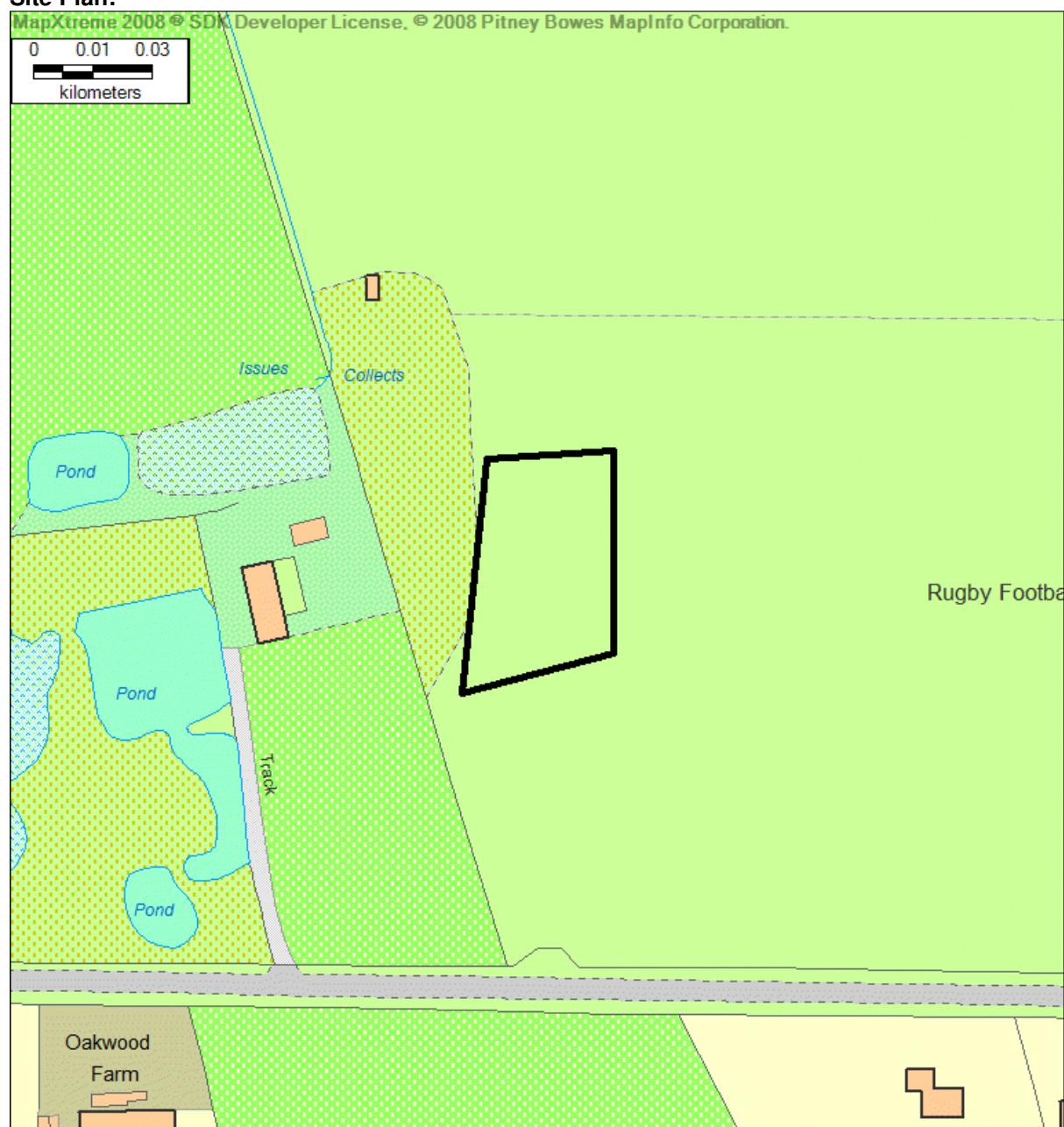
Location: Wirral Rugby Club Ltd, Thornton Common Road, Thornton Hough, Wirral

Proposal: Retrospective permission for Change of Use of additional small area of playing fields for hardstanding car park

Applicant: Wirral Rugby Club Ltd
Agent : Malcolm lewis Architect

Qualifying Petition: No

Site Plan:



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Development Plan designation:
Green Belt

Planning History:

Location: Wirral Rugby and Cricket Club, Thornton Common Road, Thornton Hough, Wirral, CH63 4JU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Retrospective permission for Change of use of small area of playing fields for a hardstanding car park for use on Saturday afternoons and Sundays (amended description)
Application No: APP/09/05358
Decision Date: 12/06/2009
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Land (field no. 4152) opposite, The Foxes, Thornton Common Road, Thornton Hough, Wirral, L63 0LU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Change of use from agricultural land to sports field.
Application No: APP/00/05185
Decision Date: 20/04/2000
Decision Type: Approve

Location: O.S. 4152, opposite The Foxes, Thornton Common Road, Thornton Hough. L63 0LU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Change of use of agricultural land to sports field.
Application No: APP/89/06602
Decision Date: 11/10/1989
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Cricket Pitch, Wirral Rugby and Cricket Club, THORNTON COMMON ROAD, THORNTON HOUGH, CH63 4JU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: The installation of three 30m x 2.74metre astro-turf cricket pitches, 1 pitch positioned on the main cricket square 2 pitches positioned on the adjacent sports field

Application No: APP/11/00392
Decision Date: 28/06/2011
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Wirral Rugby Club, Thornton Common Road, Thornton Hough. L63 0LU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Erection of building to provide golf driving ranges, office and store.
Application No: APP/91/07423
Decision Date: 31/01/1992
Decision Type: Refuse

Location: Thornton Common Wood Nature Reserve, THORNTON COMMON ROAD, THORNTON HOUGH, CH63 4JU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission
Proposal: Retrospective permission for Change of use of small area of playing fields for a hardstanding car park
Application No: APP/08/06635
Decision Date: 23/01/2009
Decision Type: Withdrawn

Location: Wirral Rugby Club, Thornton Common Road, Thornton Hough. L63 0LU
Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Proposal: Erection of building to provide golf ranges, office and store.
Application No: APP/91/06791
Decision Date: 10/12/1991
Decision Type: Withdrawn

Appeal Details

Application No APP/91/07423
Appeal Decision Dismissed
Appeal Decision Date 09/12/1992

Application No APP/91/07423
Appeal Decision Dismissed
Appeal Decision Date 09/12/1992

Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:

1.0 WARD MEMBER COMMENTS

1.1 No comments received.

2.0 SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

REPRESENTATIONS

2.1 Having regard to the Council Guidance on Publicity for Applications 4 notifications were sent to adjoining properties. A site notice was also displayed. At the time of writing this report 2 objections have been received, listing the following grounds:

- Contrary to the clubs claims the overflow parking does not relieve the hazard of vehicle parking on Thornton Common Road.
- The club should consider overflow parking elsewhere, i.e Clatterbridge.
- The proposed hours of use are too long.

CONSULTATIONS

2.2 **Highways** - No objection

MEAS - No objection

Tree Preservation Officer - No objection received

3.1 Reason for referral to Planning Committee

3.1.1 The proposal represents a departure from the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

3.2 Site and Surroundings

3.2.1 The site forms part of a field used for sporting activities. It is located within the Green Belt. To the south, between the application site and Thornton Common Road, is an existing area of car parking. Thornton Common Nature Reserve is located to the west of the site.

3.3 Proposed Development

3.3.1 This is a retrospective application for an area of overflow vehicle parking. As well as a change of use, physical works have taken place involving the installation of a sub base which has been subsequently grassed over.

3.4 Development Plan

3.4.1 Policy GB2 – Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt

Within the Green Belt there is a general presumption against inappropriate development and such development will not be approved except in very special circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for development in the Green Belt unless it is for the purposes of:

- (i) Agriculture and forestry

- (ii) Essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- (iii) The limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings, subject to Policy GB4 and Policy GB5;
- (iv) The limited infilling in existing villages, subject to Policy GB6, including limited affordable housing subject to local community needs;
- (v) The limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites identified under Proposal GB9

Such appropriate development shall not damage the visual amenities of the Green Belt by virtue of its siting, materials or design.

3.4.2 Policy RE13 - Criteria for Sports Facilities in the Green Belt

Proposals for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation will be permitted in the Green Belt where:

- (i) adequate provision has been made for highway access, and on-site car parking and servicing requirements;
- (ii) the level of traffic generated can be accommodated without requiring major alterations to rural roads;
- (iii) the visual impact of the proposals would not be intrusive within the local landscape and the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved; and
- (iv) the proposals would not cause unacceptable noise or other disturbance to neighbouring land-uses, including wildlife.

With the exception of proposals involving the re-use of an existing building, associated buildings and structures will only be permitted where they are essential to the use proposed and where their siting, scale, design and external appearance are appropriate to the setting of the area.

3.5 **Other Material Planning Considerations**

- 3.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states 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. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include 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.

3.6 **Assessment**

- 3.6.1 The main issues pertinent in the assessment of the proposal are;

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Highways;
- Ecology; and
- Amenity

3.7 Principle of Development:

- 3.7.1 The works have been undertaken to support outdoor sport and recreation, but are not considered to be essential facilities. For that reason they do not fall within the criteria included in GB2 and are therefore not acceptable in principle. It is therefore necessary for the applicant to demonstrate very special circumstance to justify why the works should be granted planning permission.

3.7.2 An application for planning permission was made in 2009 for the area of parking that is located between this later area of parking and Thornton Common Road (APP/09/05358). At the time the applicant argued that providing off road parking was safer than forcing those using the facilities to park on the highway. The Council accepted this argument and granted planning permission.

3.7.3 In order to justify the need for this additional area of parking, the applicant's agent has stated that, since 2009, the Wirral RUFC first team have been promoted through the league system and now play at a higher level. Following this success the club have attracted a greater number of spectators and members. The additional area of parking provides space for approximately 36 vehicles. It is considered that the applicant has submitted sufficient justification to support their application.

3.7.4 Planning permission APP/09/05358 limits the use of the car park to Saturday afternoons and Sundays only. During the assessment of this application the applicant was informed that a condition would be added limiting the use of this parking area to the same hours. Whilst not objecting to this, the applicant has requested greater flexibility for the following reason:

The Archery section have a number of "Archery England" Events during the spring and summer months. These attract archers from across the country as the events include Archery England, Target and Clout Championships. For such events starting at 9am in the morning we will have archers and families arriving the day prior, Friday for an event on the Saturday and Sunday, and camping on the field.

Those arriving on the day would likely arrive from 7am and depart at 7pm, and the events attract up to 120 participants over the weekends. These Archery championship events have been running for some 15-20 years and no complaints have ever been made.

The original application also outlined the Charity events that take place in particular Claire House Elliot Football Tournament and again the overflow car park use would be required for such times during, prior and after the events.

3.7.5 The applicant has therefore requested a further 30 days a year for use of this car park. This is considered to be reasonable. In order to simplify the situation, it is recommended that the condition limits the use of the car park to Saturday (all day) and Sunday, as well as the additional 30 days. Access to this car park is through the car park granted permission in 2009. This arrangement is compatible with the 2009 permission because the permission limits the use of the 2009 car park, but driving through the car park is not considered to constitute use of it.

3.8 Design:

3.8.1 The applicant has confirmed that vehicle parking has taken place in this area, as an overflow to the existing car park to the south of the site, for at least 10 years. They state that, over time, the combination of weather conditions and continual use of the grounds have led to an increasing number of vehicles getting stuck. In order to assist with drainage and stability, a sub base of stones and a geotextile membrane was laid, and then covered with grass. The result is that the area is indistinguishable from a normal field. In this respect it has an acceptable appearance, and does not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

3.8.2 It is acknowledged that, when parked with vehicles, the parking area would be more prominent. However, this would only be for certain limited periods of time.

3.9 Highways:

3.9.1 The Highways Department have raised no objection to this application. It is therefore understood that there are no highway safety concerns arising from the creation of this overflow parking area.

3.10 Ecology:

3.10.1 MEAS have confirmed that the site itself is of limited ecological value, and these small scale

works are unlikely to have a detrimental impact on nearby designated sites.

3.11 Amenity:

- 3.11.1 This overflow car park is at least 50 metres from the nearest residential dwellings. This, coupled with conditions restricting its hours of use and the number of times of year it can be used, should be sufficient to protect residential amenity.

Summary of Decision:

Having regards to the individual merits of this application the decision to grant Planning Permission has been taken having regards to the relevant Policies and Proposals in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2000) and all relevant material considerations including national policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

The applicant has submitted sufficient information to demonstrate there are very special circumstances in this particular case to justify an inappropriate form of development that would otherwise be contrary to Policy GB2. There are not considered to be any detrimental highway or ecology impacts from the works. The application is therefore considered to be acceptable within the terms of Policies GB2 and RE13 of the Wirral UDP and the provisions of the NPPF.

Recommended Decision: **Approve**

Recommended Conditions and Reasons:

1. The overflow car parking area hereby permitted shall be used only on Saturday and Sunday, and up to 30 other days in any 12 month period.

Reason: in the interests of the amenity of nearby residential dwellings, and to comply with Policy RE13 of the Wirral UDP.

Further Notes for Committee:

1. Consent under the Highways Act is required for the construction of a new vehicle access or the amendment/removal of an existing vehicular access. Proposed vehicle access to be constructed in accordance with LPA commercial concrete crossing specifications. Such works are undertaken at the developer's expense, including the relocation/replacement and/or removal of street furniture and vegetation as necessary. Submission of a S50 Highway Opening Notice is required prior to commencement of any works on the adopted highway. Please contact the Council Highway Management team area manager via www.wirral.gov.uk prior to the commencement of the works for the approval of the proposed details.

Last Comments By: 05/04/2019
Expiry Date: 27/06/2019