

From: Hawkins, Alex
Sent: 08 April 2021 10:00
To: Wells, Lesley <Lesley.Wells@easthants.gov.uk>
Cc: Hasted, Simon <Simon.Hasted@havant.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Havant Rugby Club - APP/20/01019

Hi Lesley,

It was good speaking with yesterday and thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to help me push this through.

Please see attached amended plans, I hope these suffice. I've included two separate location plans for both the lighting and MUGA.

Please see below ecology comment regarding the changes,
It will certainly change the illumination in this area, however, this area is unlikely to represent a key transit route or foraging area for bats. But we have not undertaken surveys to ascertain this and the pollarded tree on the southside of the road has some potential as a bat roost. But I think the advice still stands if the light columns are shrouded to throw most of their light downwards it should not be a problem, and they are probably far enough away from the tree to not have a direct effects on any roosting bats.

I've also spoken with Simon regarding the comments you require, he is more than happy to give a presentation behind the rationale of the project. He has forwarded the previous comments which are quite detailed, so unsure how he can elaborate on these further? If you require anything particular could you drop him an email as he is more than happy to oblige.

How will the construction of the proposed car park be funded?

The car park project is fully funded by CIL main pot funding (sum of £45,059) as approved by full council 26.02.2020. This followed the robust CIL decision-making protocol, following workshops to answer councilor queries in late 2019. The council have already given permission for the project from a non-planning perspective.

What would be the value of the proposed car park to the wider community?

The car park will service all facilities within the proximity of the car park. This includes Havant Rugby club (HRFC) and the users of the new artificial grass pitch facility, allowing this facility to reach its maximum carrying capacity and enable increased community use. It will also support users of the grass rugby pitches, which are managed by Norse South East on behalf of HBC, and the rugby clubhouse building, which is not only used in connection to rugby but by many community groups and organisations such as Slimming World, a Sewing Club, a Yoga Club and local charities and action groups who use the club as a safe and welcoming place to hold events for people who suffer with depression and dementia. The club offers such groups use of space at significantly reduced costs. The clubroom, bar and catering facilities are also hireable by local residents for private functions, such as birthday parties and wedding receptions.

The car park also supports the educational establishments on site; the Bidbury Infant and Junior schools and the day nursery and pre-school located within the rugby club building. It also services those wishing to access the Hooks Lane public open space and childrens play area for recreation and users of the Scout Hut, Havant Mens Shed and the St Johns Ambulance.

The site has become increasingly busy in recent years following the development of the facilities listed above and the growth of the number of residents who access them.

Why is there a need for the car park i.e. is there a big demand and if there has been a study on this, can it be accessed?

The need for the car park is led by the action plan within the councils adopted playing pitch strategy, linking to the local plan, and highlights the need to improve car parking at the site and meet the demand in current and future sporting facilities. This is supported by reports from users, including HRFC, that the existing car park is not of sufficient capacity to cater for all site users currently, with the problem exacerbated as the club further develop.

The existing Havant Borough Council Car park at Hooks Lane is under severe pressures during peak times at which the local facilities are utilised. This is particularly the case during school drop off and collection times at Bidbury Junior and Infant Schools and the nursery and pre-school on weekday mornings and afternoons and during peak usage times for the rugby pitches at weekends, for junior and senior matches and training.

The current car parking plan for the rugby club requires parking off site and travelling by foot to the ground once the existing car park is full. This provides a barrier for potential participants and impacts the quality of experience for users at this facility.

The additional spaces will also assist in reducing the number of vehicles parked on street along Fraser road, reducing disturbance on residential properties in the vicinity.

I am unaware of any further studies on this.

Are there any restrictions on the use of the existing car park?

The existing car park and the new proposed car park will not be chargeable, as per all car parks located at Havant Borough Council open spaces and parks. The same restrictions apply across all of these car parks, and are minimal, but I understand they include restrictions such as no overnight parking. The parking team will be able to provide fuller details on these.

What is the value of the artificial grass pitch to the wider community and what sectors of the community is the pitch available to?

The artificial pitch is available for all sectors of the community. The site is managed by the Rugby Football Union (RFU) who have sub-leased the area from HRFC. HRFC hold a Head Lease for the AGP and the clubhouse from Havant Borough Council as Landlord. The RFU manage and administer all bookings and the pitch can be booked by anybody wishing to use it, through their website.

Current users include the HRFC an RFU Accredited club, incorporated and registered as a Community Amateur Sports Club. They provide rugby opportunities for all ages and abilities from under 6 to veterans. In particular, opportunities for female participation has increased from nothing over the age of 12 ten years ago, to nearly 150 players and from one senior ladies' team to fielding 6 female teams, 2 Senior, and U18, U15, U13 and U11 teams.

Organised sport, beyond a recreational kickabout in the park with friends, is delivered by local voluntary sports clubs who are not private members clubs in the traditional sense. They tend to charge membership fees to cover their operational costs (affiliations, facility hire fees, equipment, kits, coaches, insurances etc) and will often waive or reduce these fees based on an individual's circumstances to ensure inclusivity. They are non profit making, voluntary run organisations, who re-invest any surplus back into the running of that club and are open for anybody to have a go at that sport.

In addition to the rugby club, the pitch is used for educational programmes, by other local community sports clubs, for childrens holiday camps and recreational bookings.

What are the range of uses on the artificial grass pitch?

The facility is a full size, world rugby compliant, artificial surface which replaced an existing grass rugby pitch. Its primary purpose is facilitating rugby, providing the highest quality playing surface that can be used during all conditions, resulting in fewer matches and training sessions being cancelled

due to poor quality grass/muddy fields. It also encourages wider audiences to take part in rugby by providing high quality, welcoming facilities, in turn improving local physical activity rates.

Given the artificial grass surface type, the pitch dimensions, rugby posts and line markings, the pitch can only be used formally for rugby match play. However, it provides a perfect facility for a variety of sports, physical activity and recreation sessions on an informal basis, such as use by local football and American football clubs for training sessions, fitness training sessions and school holiday sports camp delivery.

Why has the Council abandoned the use of the MUGA and not maintained it?

The MUGA facility has been unfit for purpose, reportedly for up to 20 years, when the tennis nets were first removed. This is well before my time at the council unfortunately.

The surface is uneven, rutted and pitted, with flooding issues and no clear line marking or ancillary facilities such as tennis nets required to enable use for sport.

The repairs required would constitute significant capital expense in order to bring it up to the modern standards required of a multi use games area and includes substantial resurfacing and drainage works as a minimum.

Such works are beyond the scope of the maintenance programme delivered by Norse South East on behalf of Havant Borough Council. Havant Borough Council have no internal capital budget to complete such works and are reliant on securing external grant funding to complete this type of project. This comes in the form of support from national governing bodies and Sport England. Their funding support is only accessible if they support the development of the facility in line with their strategies and that the project provides substantial physical activity outcomes, linking to local evidence, as provided in the Havant Playing Pitch Strategy. The same evidence is required to secure CIL main pot funding, given the link to the Local Plan.

In this instance, Sport England and the national governing bodies for Tennis (LTA), Netball (England Netball) and Basketball (England Basketball), which can be played on a MUGA confirm that this is not a strategic site for their sports, and as such the facility is not considered as a tennis, netball or basketball facility within the Havant Playing Pitch Strategy. There is no evidence base to support the re-instatement of the MUGA as a sports facility.

Indeed, Sport England and the RFU are in support of the development of the MUGA to car park, given it provides the required ancillary facility to enable the maximum usage of the new sporting facilities on site, which in their view is the best method of increasing physical activity rates within the area.

There is also substantial planning history, in which at the point the nursery was approved to be delivered in place of existing squash courts at the rugby club, a condition of planning was that the MUGA was to be developed into a training facility with artificial surface to mitigate the loss of squash courts as sports facilities. This was prior to the development of the full size artificial rugby pitch project and subsequently this condition was discharged when this AGP project materialised. Additional parking was deemed the priority use of the MUGA in order to support the new facility to reach its maximum potential.

Other nearby facilities are identified in the Havant Playing Pitch Strategy as strategic sites for the development of sport, such as the newly refurbished tennis courts at Bidbury Mead, under the support of the LTA (Lawn Tennis Association), to encourage the maximum level of community use.

Kind Regards,

Alex Hawkins BSc (Hons)

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