

Planning Committee

18 June 2008

Development by the  
County Council



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**Report of Rod Lugg, Head of Environment and Planning**

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**Purpose of the report: To enable the Committee to determine applications for planning permission which have been received in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.**

**Wear Valley District:** Provision of new tennis courts including 8 no. floodlight columns, fencing and new tarmacadam surface, Bishop Barrington Sports College, Bishop Auckland (Regulation 3)

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## **Introduction**

- 1 The school has specialist sports college status and is seeking to extend the range of sports facilities on the site by upgrading and extending its tennis courts.

## **Proposal**

- 2 The proposal involves the extension and resurfacing of existing tennis courts to the north east of the school site adjacent to a recently constructed sports hall (see attached plan). Three courts are currently located in this area and are in poor general condition. A fourth court was removed to create car parking in association with the new sports hall. It is intended to reinstate the four courts and reconfigure existing car parking (resulting in the loss of 3 spaces). The 4 tennis courts would have overall dimensions of 60.96m (length) x 34.75m (width) and the area would be resurfaced with tarmac and remarked. A 2.75m high green powder coated ballstop fence would surround the courts and would incorporate a double access gate at its south eastern corner.
- 3 Eight 8m high floodlighting columns would be erected to illuminate the 3 most southerly tennis courts and these would be coloured dark green to correspond with the surrounding ball stop fencing. The columns would support a combination of twin and single head lanterns. The courts would be used by the school from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and would be available for community use 5pm to 9pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 6pm Saturdays and Sundays. Floodlights would only be used when required as a result of poor lighting within these hours and when the courts are actually in use. The changing rooms within the sports hall and car parking area adjacent to the tennis courts would be available for community users of the tennis courts. Use of the courts would be based on a booking and payment system similar to that operating at the sports hall.

## **Consultations and Representations**

- 4 Wear Valley District Council raise no objections to the proposal.
- 5 Bishop Auckland Town Council (consulted 08 April 2008) has not commented on the application, but requested that the Town Council continues to be notified of planning applications in its area as part of the planning process.
- 6 Sport England (consulted 08 April 2008) supports the application, subject to a condition relating to the submission and implementation of a community use agreement should planning permission be granted.
- 7 The application has been advertised on site and neighbouring residents notified. The school also undertook its own pre-application consultation with the closest neighbours. 3 letters of objection have been received

in response to the planning notification, including one signed by the occupiers of 2 properties. These raise the following concerns:

- Use of the courts will result in noise and disturbance to neighbouring residents especially during evenings and weekends and school holidays.
- The courts are too close to residential properties and the floodlights will result in light pollution within neighbouring gardens.
- The play area has been the source of previous anti social behaviour by students and others including verbal abuse, bad language and damage to neighbouring properties and this is likely to continue.
- The facilities should be sited elsewhere on the large school site away from residential properties, or existing community tennis courts in the town should be upgraded.
- The proposal will result in devaluation of property.

*Comment: The amenity implications of the proposal are considered in paragraphs 10 and 11.*

## **Planning Comment**

### Planning Policy

- 8 The proposal would provide an enhanced sporting facility on the site in accordance with Policy RL1 (Recreation and Leisure – New Provision) of the Wear Valley Local Plan. The key planning considerations in this case therefore relate to the integration of the facility on the site and surrounding area and the impact on residential amenity particularly in terms of noise, visual impact and light pollution. Policy GD1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan is relevant in this respect.

### Design and Appearance

- 9 The existing courts are located to the rear of the site in an area largely enclosed from public view by the school buildings and neighbouring residential properties. As such the upgrading works would have limited visual impact on the surrounding area. At the detailed level the resurfaced playing area and new fencing would represent an improvement to the existing tennis courts. Although the floodlighting columns would extend above the height of the surrounding fence these would be spaced out at regular intervals and have a narrow profile and appropriate colour. It is not considered therefore that they would be unduly intrusive in visual terms.

### Residential Amenity

- 10 Use of the courts would have some impact upon the amenities of the nearest residents and 7 properties directly border the site. The rear elevations of the closest two bungalows on Arundel Close would be approximately 5 metres to the north and occupiers may experience some disturbance from use of the courts. However, the area has a longstanding history of use for hard play purposes and some of the current activities would cease. It is not intended to provide floodlighting on the most northerly tennis court adjacent to these properties which would limit its evening use. The closest floodlights would be approximately 22.5m away and aligned away from rear gardens.

- 11 Other properties on Lambton Drive are located approximately 17m to the east of the tennis courts. Perimeter hedging would provide some lower level screening of the courts and the floodlighting is designed to be focused on the playing surface, with minimum light spillage outside this area. The floodlights would only be used on courts that are in use and when it is otherwise too dark to play and would not be used after 9pm Monday to Friday or 6pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The installation of floodlighting at the tennis courts is therefore not expected to have a significant adverse effect upon residential amenity. The school is hoping to secure agreement with a local tennis club regarding after school use of the facility. Should this be the case then out of school use would principally be by the tennis club. In any event the courts would be subject to a formal booking and payment system. They would remain secured when not in use and would be monitored by a CCTV camera attached to the sports hall. Pupils using the courts during school hours for tennis and netball would be supervised. The proposed use is therefore not expected to lead to unacceptable noise and disturbance nor be a particular source of anti social behaviour.

#### Car Parking

- 12 The extension of the existing tennis courts would result in the loss of 3 car parking spaces, but this would have a marginal effect on car parking levels on the site. Whilst the proposal would attract new users these can be accommodated within the school's existing car park and community use would largely fall outside of school hours when pressure on available parking is at its lowest. The Head of Highway Management offers no objections to the proposal.

#### Recommendation and Reasons

- 13 The proposal would enhance the level of school and community sports provision at the site and improve recreational opportunities in the local area. The scheme involves the upgrade of an area that has long been associated with outdoor play and can be satisfactorily accommodated in physical terms so that the impact upon local amenity would be minimised. Subject to conditions to control the use and hours of operation of the facility, I therefore **recommend** that planning permission be granted for the development for the following reason:

The proposal by virtue of the size, location, appearance and nature of the use and intended hours of use and lighting levels would have an acceptable impact on the surrounding area and upon local amenity and would accord with Policies GD1 and RL1 of the Wear Valley District Local Plan.

#### No departure

#### Background Papers:

Application, consultations and responses, site location plans.

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**Contact:** John Byers Tel: 0191 383 3408

**Local Members:** Councillors N Harrison and S Zair

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