

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 7th May 2019
DEPARTMENT: Planning Service
HEAD OF PLANNING: Peter Baguley

APPLICATION REF: N/2019/0206

LOCATION: Playing Field St Crispin, Berrywood Road

DESCRIPTION: Installation of mesh panel backstop and fences with two concrete block dug outs adjacent to the baseball field at St Crispins Park

WARD: Upton Ward

APPLICANT: Mr Nick Russell
AGENT: N/A

REFERRED BY: Head of Planning
REASON: Council owned land

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The proposed fencing and dug-outs would provide for enhanced sports facilities whilst not resulting in undue adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or on the amenities of existing neighbouring residents. The proposal is therefore compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework, the requirements of Policies S10, RC2 and BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

2 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 The proposal is for the erection of permanent fencing and dug out facilities on the established baseball pitch in the playing fields. The fencing would vary in height, up to 5.125m but with the majority being 1.8m high. Two dug outs with protective enclosures are also proposed, these would be 13m in length and up to 2.4m above ground level. Drop down shutters would be fitted when the dug outs are not in use.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The site is part of a long established playing field which has been in use as a baseball pitch for 3 years. The site is adjacent to housing and the fencing would be located over 20m from the garden of the nearest houses, and up to 110m away from some of the houses facing the site.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 The development of the former St Crispin's hospital site for residential use was approved in outline under application reference N/1997/0566 on 12th November 2002. This included a requirement for the existing playing fields to be transferred to the Council.
- 4.2 In 2014 a variation to the S106 agreement was approved by the Planning Committee, to remove the obligation to provide a link road through the playing fields.
- 4.3 A new community centre was approved adjacent to the playing fields on 15th March 2016 under reference N/2015/0987. This includes changing facilities. The community centre has since been constructed and in operation.

5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014) and Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

Section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to preserving a listed building or its setting and to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

5.2 National Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Section 8 – Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities.

Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

5.3 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy S10 - Sustainable Development Principles
Policy RC2 - Community needs
Policy BN5 - Historic Environment and Landscape

5.4 Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)

Due to the age of the plan, the amount of weight that can be attributed to the aims and objectives of this document are diminished, however, the following policies are material to this application:

Policy E9 – Locally Important Landscape Areas
Policy E20 – New Development (Design)
Policy E26 – Development in Conservation Areas
Policy L26 – Leisure Proposals

5.5 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Northamptonshire Parking Standards (September 2016)
Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004
Residential Extensions and Alterations Design Guide SPD

6 **CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS**

Comments received are summarised as follows:

- 6.1 **NBC Conservation** – No objection on conservation grounds. The baseball pitch is within part of the playing field on the former hospital grounds. The fencing and dug outs will have a neutral impact on the historic character of St Crispin's Conservation Area.
- 6.2 **Environmental Health** - No objections to the proposal, no conditions would wish to add to any decision document.
- 6.3 **Duston Parish Council** - Duston Parish Council has serious concerns about this attracting anti-social behaviour, particularly in relation to the dug outs. This proposal is also large and therefore this will restrict the field use for other activities. It would also have an adverse visual impact on the field.
- 6.4 Representations received from the occupiers of 22 neighbouring and nearby properties (including 2 in support), as well as 10 with no full address given, making the following points in summary:
- Not necessary as portable equipment could be used, as done by other users of the fields.
 - Will not be used for half the year / limited number of games are played.
 - Public open space would no longer be freely available.
 - Will attract anti-social behaviour.
 - Would be an eyesore.
 - Pitch should be located further from houses.
 - May lead to demand for floodlighting.
 - Will increase traffic to the site.
 - If team becomes unviable the structures would remain and would have to be dealt with by the Council.
 - Support the proposal as will stop balls entering gardens.

7 **APPRAISAL**

Principle of the proposal

- 7.1 The proposal is associated with the current use of the pitch for baseball, a use which is consistent with the established use as a sports field. In principle, it is considered that the installation of these structures would be acceptable as this would enhance the usability of the space for this use and this would be in line with the objectives of Policy RC2 of the Joint Core Strategy.
- 7.2 The field is open and accessible to the public, however the structures would not prevent such access as they are not enclosing barriers and take up only a very small proportion of the overall space.

Visual impact including the impact on the Conservation Area.

- 7.3 Whilst acceptable in principle, it is also necessary to consider the potential adverse impacts of the proposal, particularly in visual terms.
- 7.4 The proposed fencing is, in part, over 5m in height. However, it would be located at a distance of over 100m from houses on Frank Large Walk facing out onto the site and would be at the far side of the field when viewed from public vantage points, such as St Crispin Drive. Whilst closer to houses on Southfield Road, the site is screened from these by existing mature trees.
- 7.5 In spite of the distance involved, the structures would still be visible. However, these would be seen for what they are, structures to support a sporting use of a sports pitch. Such features are not unusual on sports pitches and what is proposed can be compared to a multi-use games area or cricket nets, as may be seen elsewhere. As such it is not considered that this would be an incongruous feature and would not thereby have an undue visual impact.
- 7.6 The site is located within a conservation area, however it is distant from any historic features, the nearest being the Grade II listed Greek Orthodox Church at a distance of over 200m. The impact of this has been assessed in the Heritage Impact Assessment accompanying the application and it can be noted that the Conservation Officer has raised no objections. It is considered that any harm to the setting of heritage assets would be outweighed by the benefits of providing enhanced facilities for the public.

Impact on the amenities of adjoining and nearby residents

- 7.7 Other than in visual terms, as discussed above, impacts on residents would generally result from the use of the site. However, this is an existing established use of the land, dating back to its use in association with the St Crispins Hospital. Whilst the permanent nature of the structure may in theory allow for more intensive use, this could occur in any event.
- 7.8 Conversely, the construction of the structures would have the benefit of protecting nearby houses from the incursion of balls and would therefore enhance the safety of residents.

Other matters

- 7.9 Reference has been made by some objectors to the need for the development. Whilst it is considered that this would enhance the leisure facility, as a general principle the need or otherwise for a development is not an issue which can be taken into account in determining an application, only its impact.
- 7.10 Reference has also been made to the possibility of anti-social behaviour. In response to this, it can be noted that the dug-outs would be provided with security shutters and this would reduce the possibility of misuse.
- 7.11 Concerns have also been raised about the possibility of the site being floodlit in the future. This would have a potential adverse impact, however this is not currently proposed and would require a further application which would have to be considered on its merits.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposal would enhance the existing leisure use of the site whilst not having any undue adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the setting of the nearby listed building or the amenities of nearby residential occupiers, either in visual terms or otherwise. The proposal is therefore in line with the principles of the NPPF and Development Plan Policy.

9 CONDITIONS

- (1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 6494 1001, 6494 1002, 6494 1003.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

- (3) Details of all proposed external facing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that the development will harmonise with its surroundings in accordance with Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

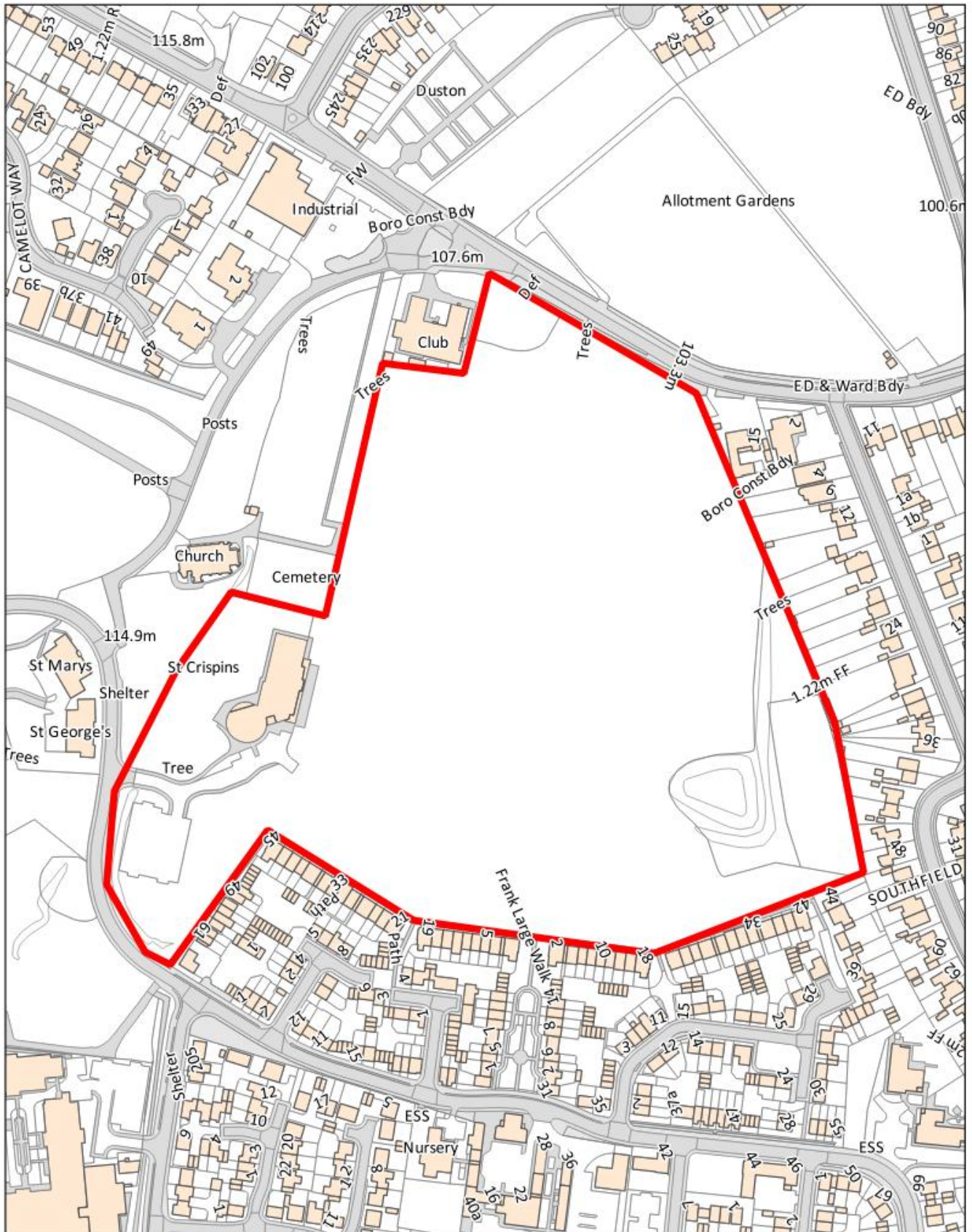
- 10.1 Application file N/2019/0206.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The development is not CIL liable.

12 SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Title: **Playing Field St Crispin, Berrywood Rd**

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Date: 24-04-2019

Scale: 1:2,591

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