

Subject: Hauxton Village Hall Pre-application Advice

Please find below my advice in respect of your pre-application enquiry regarding the provision of a village hall on the recreation ground in Hauxton. While the advice is informal in terms of its status in the planning process, I have discussed the issues with Julie Ayre, Team Leader for the East Development Control Team and Tony Pierce, Interim Head of Development Control, in order to give some comfort that the advice represents the general view of the department at this time.

Recommendation

In principle, I am of the view that there is potential for a new village hall facility on the Recreation Ground and that a scheme for such is worth exploring in more detail. As you are aware, the site is a sensitive one and support for such a proposal would be subject to a detailed scheme demonstrating it would have an acceptable impact on its surroundings. I will discuss the main constraints and issues in more detail below. I see this pre-application advice response as a starting point for a collaborative discussion, should the village decide to proceed with a scheme for a village hall on the recreation ground and I will be more than happy to continue to discuss these issues with you and offer advice as necessary.

Site Constraints

The recreation ground site is outside of the village Development Framework and is therefore considered to be in the countryside. It is also located within the Cambridge Green Belt. There are residential properties on both sides of the portion of the recreation ground which fronts Church Road and in depth along the Eastern boundary. The frontage of the recreation ground onto Church Road is designated as an Important Countryside Frontage and there is a Grade II listed building opposite (Little Manor House). The recreation ground is open, fairly flat and is wooded along the Southern boundary.

Green Belt

The site is located within the Cambridge Green Belt and benefits from a good level of openness, notwithstanding the visual separation from the wider countryside provided by the tree belt to the South. The impact of the development on the Green Belt will be a key issue in determination of any planning application for the scheme. Green Belt policy is detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which can be found here: (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf) The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should consider the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt unless the buildings are for agriculture or forestry; appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or cemeteries; limited infilling in villages and limited affordable housing for local community needs; or limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land). While an argument might be able to be made, depending on the balance of the use of the village hall, that the building would be for the purpose of outdoor sport and/or outdoor recreation, I think it is likely that we would take the view that the village hall would fall outside the above definitions and that it would therefore represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It requires applications to clearly demonstrate any very special circumstances and states that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

I believe that you may be able to put together a case which demonstrates that very special circumstances exist with regard to this scheme which would outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt. This case would likely be a combination of factors such as the need/demand for the facility within the village, the lack of suitable alternative sites, the provision of associated facilities to serve the recreation ground use and the wider public benefit of the provision, as well as any other factors which you identify. From reading the Village Hall Feasibility Study, I can see that a number of other sites have been considered and there may be new options which were not considered in 2012. Any application for

provision of a building on the recreation ground would need to include a 'sequential test' demonstrating that other sites which are not subject to the Green Belt constraint have been considered and have been demonstrated to be unsuitable. Demonstrating 'very special circumstances' has historically been a relatively high bar to clear, so this would likely require the input of a planning specialist, however I believe it may be possible to make a convincing case, hence my conclusion that the scheme may be worth pursuing.

In addition to demonstrating very special circumstances, it will be necessary to identify a location on the recreation ground which will minimise the impact of a new structure on the openness and character of the Green Belt. I have visited the site and spent some time considering potential locations and my suggestion is that you focus on the area in the North Eastern portion of the recreation ground, to the South of the rear gardens of Nos 19 and 21 Church Road. The reason for this is that there is existing development to the frontage as well as in depth to the East which would mean that a new building would be seen against those existing houses in wider views and would be located next to an existing cluster or development rather than in a more open part of the recreation ground. Clearly this introduces considerations in terms of neighbour impact, which I will detail below. In addition, this location removes the need for built development within the open frontage of the recreation ground onto Church Street, which is an Important Countryside Frontage where there would be a presumption against such built development.

I have attached a hatched plan identifying the location where I am suggesting the building is considered.

Amenity Issues

The positioning of the building in relatively close proximity to neighbouring residential properties has the potential to impact on residents of those houses both in terms of the physical impact of the built development and potential noise and disturbance from its use. These impacts will need to be considered and mitigated through the careful location and design of the building as well as potentially through landscaping. Where necessary the Local Planning Authority can also place restrictions on times of use or say the hours during which amplified music can be played, but it is preferable if the impacts on neighbouring properties can be 'designed out' rather than needing to be controlled by condition.

In terms of the physical impact of the building, I would suggest that a single storey building would help minimise the impact on neighbours (and would also likely be a requirement in terms of the impact on the Green Belt). A single storey design, as well as locating the building sufficiently far away from neighbouring boundaries that it would not be overbearing and that landscape planting could be implemented to soften its appearance, would likely result in an acceptable impact on the light and outlook of neighbouring properties.

In terms of the potential for noise and disturbance, location and landscaping would again be key in mitigating the impact on the nearest residential neighbours. In addition, thought would need to be given to the overall design particularly window and door openings and the location of outside congregation spaces to ensure that the sound generated from the use of the building is focussed away from the neighbouring properties and either contained within the building or directed out onto the recreation ground.

Design Issues

The provision of a new building, in my view, represents an interesting opportunity for a bespoke, well designed building and you may wish to canvass a number of architects for their views on how they would approach such a building. Further to the suggestion of a single storey building for the reasons identified above, it might be worth considering a pavilion style building with a low pitched or flat roof as this would further minimise height and impact on neighbours and the Green Belt. Having said that, I do not wish to be overly prescriptive about the design approach at this stage, although I would be happy to comment on sketch schemes should the project progress. The design and location of outside spaces, ancillary elements, paths and landscaping will play an important part in the success of the design as will

the relationship of the building to the recreation ground itself in terms of the positioning of its various rooms and functions. You will also likely want to consider issues such as the capacity of any building to accommodate measures for the generation of renewable energy and its thermal and energy efficiency.

Car Parking and Access

The existing car parking area on the frontage of the recreation ground would likely remain to serve the new village hall and it might be necessary to upgrade it or extend it slightly. Given both the exiting open character of the frontage and the setting of listed buildings opposite, this would need to be done sensitively in order to avoid a 'sea' of parking in that area, but I believe an acceptable solution could likely be designed. A relatively minor service access could then be created for access to the new hall. Any application will need to demonstrate that adequate access, parking and turning can be provided in the vicinity in order for the impact of the development on highway safety to be assessed.

I hope the above advice is clear and provides enough detail on the matters which need to be considered at this point in the process. There may be other more minor issues not detailed above and I will be happy to advise on any additional issues you identify in due course. In addition, I will be happy to advise on the information which would be required as part of any planning application. Should you have any questions of clarification or require any further information at this stage, please feel free to contact me.

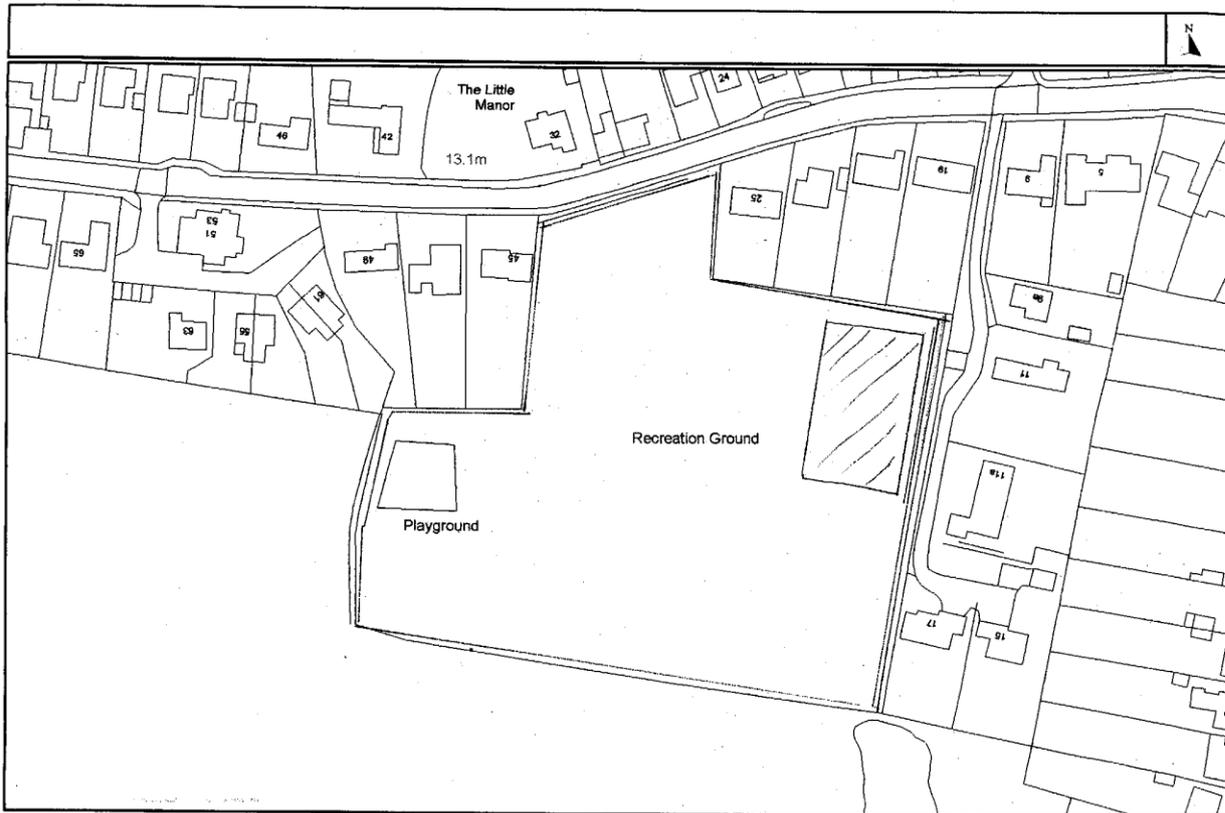
Kind regards,

Dan

Dan Smith | Planning Officer

South Cambridgeshire Hall | Cambourne Business Park | Cambourne | Cambridge | CB23 6EA

t: 01954 713162  01954 713162 | e: daniel.smith@scams.gov.uk



Reproduced from the 2008 Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's stationary office (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.

Scale 1/1250
Centre = 543820 E 252065 N

Date 4/12/2014