

Item B. 3 **07/00203/FUL** **Permit Full Planning Permission**

Case Officer **Miss Lyndsey Cookson**

Ward **Eccleston And Mawdesley**

Proposal **Formation of skateboarding, roller-blading and stunt-bike facility, and widening of path by 1m (part-retrospective)**

Location **Millenium Green Hurst Green Mawdesley Ormskirk**

Applicant **Rod Collins**

Proposal This application relates to the Millenium Green site, located off Hurst Green, Mawdesley. The proposal is for the formation of a skateboarding, roller-blading and stunt-bike facility, and widening an existing 2 metre path by 1 metre. It is proposed to locate the skateboarding, roller-blading and stunt-bike facility adjacent to the north-easterly boundary, approximately 100 metres from the main site entrance which is off Hurst Green. The section of pathway to be widened is approximately 110 metres in length, between the main site entrance and the proposed skateboard facility. This part of the proposal is retrospective.

The skateboarding, roller-blading and stunt-bike facility would be sited in an area which currently comprises of hardstanding and a small number of benches. The area would measures 25 metres in length by 10.5 metres in width, and is adjacent to a children's play area. The surface will be comprised of a smooth concrete finish, painted green. The equipment proposed in connection with this facility consists of two no. ramps (2.5 metres in width x 4.5 metres in length x 2 metres in height), two no. benches (0.7m in width x 2 metres in length x 0.5 metres in height), two no. rails (0.1m in width x 2.5m in length x 0.5m in height) and one no. 'jump combo' (2.6m in width x 6m in length x 0.65m in height). In addition, the two jumps will incorporate 1 metre high safety fencing on the platforms.

The section of pathway to be widened will involve some excavation works and compression of stones. The topsoil removed as a result of these works will be re-used to create a grassed banking area, which will measure 20 metres in length by 3 metres in width by 1 metre in height. This banking will be sited adjacent to the skateboarding equipment, in between the proposed site and the children's play area.

Policy PPG2 - Green Belts'
PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'
DC1 – Development in the Green Belt
LT14 - Protection of Existing Play and other Open Space

Planning History 99/00355/COU – Use of land as Millennium Green incorporating footpaths, play equipment, seating areas and landscaping. Permitted on the 7 July 1999.

Consultations I am awaiting comments from the parish council, the Council's Greenspace Co-ordinator and Environmental Services.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer has raised no objection to this application. The ash tree and a few small saplings to be removed are of minimal impact. The ash tree can be easily replaced with a comparable size from stock.

Representations

Forth-three letters in support of the proposal have been received. The issues raised can be summarised as:

- It will help to integrate youngsters into village life – there are currently limited opportunities for them;
- It will create a safe environment that will keep children occupied and physically fit;
- A positive move for future generations;
- Great benefit to the youngsters in Mawdesley.

Twenty-nine letters have been received objecting to the proposal. The issues raised can be summarised as:

- Increased noise, disturbance and loss of privacy;
- Loss of outlook for residents;
- Concerns with safety and vandalism;
- Adverse impact on the character of Millennium Green;
- Loss of an existing pleasant facility, which to some members of the community represents a garden of remembrance;
- Loss of trees and wildlife disturbance;
- Inappropriate siting - there could be a more suitable location away from the children's play area and main entrance, nearer to existing facilities for young people at the far end of the Green.

Argument put forward by the applicant

- The chosen site has been carefully selected. It is largely an area of hard standing, which was originally designated as a sitting area, but has never been well-used as there are over 12 other benches and seats located in more open aspects around the Green;
- It will be located near the children's play area so that parents can watch over their children from one location;
- This location is preferred by the Council's Greenspace Co-ordinator, on child security grounds;
- The facility will be clearly observable by any visitors to the Green, yet it will not be obvious from the main entrance and should be far enough away from the nearest residents and neighbours not to be a nuisance;
- This facility takes up less than 2% of the Green;
- Due to the design and materials, the equipment will be extremely durable, with reduced noise levels;
- A grassed banking along one of the sides will provide a soft green edge to the facility and reduce noise levels, and can be used by spectators watching the action.

Assessment

The main issues to consider are: impact on the Green Belt; impact on the existing play and open space facilities and neighbour amenity. Each is dealt with in turn:

Impact on the Green Belt

The construction of small-scale structures for outdoor sport or

recreation purposes is not necessarily inappropriate in the Green Belt. PPG2 makes reference to essential facilities which should be genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt. PPG17 states that planning permission should be granted in Green Belts for proposals to establish or to modernise essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation where the openness of the Green Belt is maintained. The proposal is for a skateboarding, rollerblading and stunt-bike facility, and for path widening, which are both ancillary to the recreational activities on the site. It is therefore considered that the size and scale of the proposed development is not inappropriate.

The skateboarding, rollerblading and stunt-bike facility would be relatively well screened, and sited adjacent to existing recreational uses. It is not considered the proposal would appear incongruous in relation to its surroundings. The proposed equipment is considered to be modest in scale and would not detract from the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

The path widening proposal would result in additional levels of hard standing, which is not generally encouraged in Green Belt locations, although it is not considered that the resultant appearance of the path would have an adverse impact on the area's open character.

Impact on Existing Play and Open Space Facilities

PPG17 states that planning authorities may wish to allow small-scale structures where these would support the existing recreational uses, or would provide facilities for new recreational uses. In rural areas, small-scale facilities will be acceptable where they are located in, or adjacent to villages to meet the needs of the local community.

Millennium Green is allocated within the Local Plan as a designated playspace. In accordance with policy LT14, land currently used as such will be retained for its recreation and amenity value. Ancillary development will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

- a) it is in connection with and will enhance the recreational and/or amenity value of the open space;
- b) it is of a size and scale which does not detract from the character of the open space;
- c) it will not have a detrimental effect on any site of nature conservation value;
- d) the development will not affect land capable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, bowling green or tennis court including any safety margin and does not result in the loss of, or inability to make use of any playing pitch, bowling green or tennis court or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facility on the site.

The skateboarding, rollerblading and stunt-bike facility is proposed in connection with the existing recreational use of the site, and as an additional recreational facility, will enhance the recreational value of the area.

The proposed scale is considered to be reasonable, and the facility includes all equipment one would expect to find in connection with this activity. The overall extent of the proposal is

confined in an area which is relatively well screened, although enjoys open aspects into the Green for surveillance and access purposes. For these reasons, It will not appear intrusive or detract from the area's existing character.

The proposal would result in the loss of one young tree and a few small saplings, although their loss would not detract from the positive contribution which the trees make to the visual amenity of the area. Information submitted with the application on behalf of Merseyside Bat Group, states that none of these trees appear suitable for bat roosts.

Impact on *neighbour amenity*

The nearest residential properties to the skateboarding, rollerblading and stunt-bike facility are located on Hurst Green, which are approximately 100 metres away.

Whilst the facility would be visible from these properties, due to the scale of the proposal and the distance from the properties, there would be no adverse loss of outlook or visual amenity for these residents. In terms of noise and disturbance, although I am awaiting comments from Environmental Services, I am not expecting them to raise concerns with the proposal in terms of noise levels adversely affecting neighbouring residents. This is because the area is currently used for recreational activities which have some impact on these properties in terms of noise and disturbance, and the resultant impact is not considered to be sufficiently adverse to justify a refusal. In addition, the facility is sited a considerable distance from neighbouring properties.

Conclusion

The proposal is accordingly recommended for approval. Both the skateboarding, rollerblading and stunt-bike facility and the path-widening scheme amount to appropriate development in the Green Belt, support the existing recreational value of the site, and would not result in an unacceptable impact on neighbour amenity.

Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission Conditions

1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved for the skateboarding, roller-blading and stunt-bike facility shall be carried out in accordance with the plan and dimensional details received on the 3rd April 2007.

Reason: To define the consent and to ensure all works are carried out in a satisfactory manner.

3. Before the development commences, full details of the colour and finish of the concrete surface and the skateboarding, roller-blading and stunt-bike equipment shall have been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall hereafter be retained in accordance with these approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason : In the interests of the character and appearance of the area and in accordance with Policy No. DC1 and LT14 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

4. Before the ash tree is felled full details (including species, stature and location) of a replacement tree to be planted shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The replacement tree planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within nine months of the tree felling.

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenity of the area and in accordance with Policy Nos. DC1 and EP9 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.
