Application Number: ADC/0648/07 **Recommendation – APPROVE**

Site: **The Ham, Eastern Avenue, Shoreham-by-Sea**

Proposal: **Concrete skateboarding facilities comprising street course and bowl areas usable by all extreme wheeled sports (ie. in-line skaters, boardriders, BMX bikers and skateboarders) (ADC Regulation 3 application)**

The Application

The application, submitted by this Council, relates to 'The Ham', the triangular shaped public green ('common land') that is bounded by the A259 Brighton Road to the south and by Eastern Avenue to the west and north.

The proposal is for a new concrete-surfaced extreme sports facility which would cater for local skateboarders, BMX riders and in-line skaters. The facility comprises two parts, being a 'street course' measuring 23m x 14m ($330m^2$) in area, and a 'bowl' itself made up of three parts that measure a combined 24m x 20m ($480m^2$) in area. The total facility will take up approximately a third of the existing grassed open space.

A geotechnical investigation has been carried out confirming soil types and water levels are such that they allow the facility to be dug into the ground as deeply as possible and thereby minimise its visual impact on the area. Further works involving improvements to access, landscaping, lighting and CCTV surveillance of the site are planned; however details have not been included with this application and it is requested that they be dealt with by imposing conditions on any approval (where necessary), or undertaken by the Council at a later date under 'permitted development' rights.

The application is the culmination of a project that began in October 2006, with an appointed steering group having met fortnightly since June 2007 in order to finalise the scheme and design the layout. The final design and location of the facility reflects the outcome of a public consultation program undertaken by this group which identified The Ham as the overwhelmingly favoured location.

Consultations and Representations

County Transport Planning Services: To ~~be reported~~. Objects

Sussex Police: To ~~be reported~~. No obj

Environment Agency: To ~~be reported~~ No obj, but conditions

Southern Water Services: To ~~be reported~~ No obj

Director of Services: The EHO has no objection but asks whether a pedestrian crossing would be provided for young people to get to the site.

Third Parties: ~~No representations~~ Obj from 27 Mews Rd yet received but the statutory consultation period does not close until the 6 December 2007.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance:

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved until adoption of new South East Plan): LOC1, NE11-12, DEV1, DEV4
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved until adoption of new Adur Development Plan): AG1, AR1
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (ODPM 2005)
PPG17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation' (ODPM 2002)

Planning Assessment:

Policies

The objectives of PPG17 are to support urban renaissance and promote social inclusion and community cohesion and wellbeing through well planned and maintained open spaces and promote sustainability through easily accessible development. Reference is made to the need to enhance existing public open spaces, especially those which are underused, including by new recreational uses provided such development is not insensitive to the character of the open space.

Policy NE11 of the Structure Plan requires that new or improved community facilities should be permitted where they meet the identified needs of local communities. DEV 1 states that development should not be permitted unless construction, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are of high quality taking into account the need to, amongst other things, integrate and where possible enhance adjoining land uses and minimise conflicts between land use and activities.

The site is specifically subject to policy AR1 of the Local Plan. This states that development of public open spaces will normally only be permitted if it is for recreational purposes and subject to the amenity of nearby residents not being adversely affected.

Site Selection

The 'Shoreham Skaters' working group and the appointed steering committee considered various alternative sites including Buckingham Park, Middle Road and Adur Recreation Grounds and 'The Ham'. The latter was considered the preferred site due to:-

- Its highly accessibility to a wide area, being a town centre location with a well established road and pathway system linking the site with the majority of the Shoreham area;
- Its relative isolation from sensitive land uses such as residential, that might be impinged upon by nuisance and disturbance associated with the activity (ie. noise, congregation of youths);

- The relative ease by which the site can be provided with lighting and CCTV which would assist in monitoring nuisance and anti-social behaviour; and
- The high visibility of the site allowing surveillance from adjoining roads and premises, and its proximity to the Police Station allowing it to be easily patrolled.

Effect on other users of the public open space

The existing open space appears to be one of the most underused in the District, lacking in facilities. Although quite extensive, the size of the proposed facility is such that two-thirds of The Ham can continue to be used for passive recreational uses. The provision of lighting (and CCTV) would extend the hours within which these activities can safely occur, whilst additional park furniture such as seating would improve the comfort of users of the site.

Visual amenity

The Ham is identified in both the Shoreham Renaissance Masterplan and Shoreham Maritime Regeneration Strategy as an area of open space with 'common land' status that provides an excellent opportunity to introduce a focus point and create a civic space that can mark the eastern gateway into Shoreham Town Centre.

There are significant concerns about the visual impact of this type of facility in such a prominent place with very little existing screening. However, provided it is built with sufficient care and attention to the quality of its detailed design and construction, and provided it is adequately maintained, the proposal need not be inconsistent with the objectives of the above strategies.

The applicant group consider it provides a range of opportunities by which it can break the mould of previous skateboard facilities. Early artistic impressions incorporating the use of uplighting on 'palm leaf' towers, flint-surfacing of the enclosing wall and run-off areas and feature barrier fencing are being put forward. However, they are yet to be finalised and budgeted and are included in the application papers in an illustrative manner only, giving an indication of how the facility *might* ultimately appear. Imposition of conditions regarding submission of approval of detailed design treatment, landscaping and lighting, etc are therefore essential to enable adequate planning control over the appearance of the facility.

Impact on nearby land uses

On the opposite side of Eastern Avenue, to the north, is the car park of the retail warehouse (Dunelm Soft Furnishings), on raised ground, behind a row of mature trees. To the south, on the opposite side of the A259, is a row of small business units, with Kwik-Fit to the east. To the west, is the Civic Centre. To the north-east, adjoining the railway level crossing, is the McDonalds restaurant and drive through take-away.

It is considered that none of these uses is unduly sensitive to noise from the proposed facility such as to warrant refusal of the application, particularly the separation provided by the existing roads. A possible concern is the risk of nearby premises being subject to anti-social behaviour which may adversely affect their businesses. However, the objective of the facility is to avoid anti-social behaviour by focussing the attention of young persons on the recreational facilities on offer.

Access

The site has been chosen because of its relatively central location in Shoreham as it is intended to serve as wide an area as possible. It is a sustainable location, as sought by policy DEV4.

Clearly, a less satisfactory aspect is that of highway safety because the site is surrounded by roads and there is no pedestrian crossing facility (nor at the traffic lights). DEV4 requires development to cater safely as well as conveniently for all travel needs. The proposed facility is likely to attract far more users than does the existing public open space.

The A259 is a major road with very high traffic levels but users of the facility would not need to cross this road as there is currently no housing on its southern side nor any shops or similar premises (those users from Shoreham Beach can cross the A259 at the pelican crossing at Coronation Green). Eastern Avenue is less busy and traffic is not normally fast moving, although there is a high proportion of lorries. Those users walking from the north east, crossing the railway, would not need to cross Eastern Avenue itself (although they would have to cross the Dolphin Road junction and the McDonald's access).

Bearing in mind that users of the facility are likely to be predominantly older children/teenagers, it is not considered that the location of the facility would result in unacceptable highway danger such as to warrant refusal of the application. It is also not considered that a formal pedestrian crossing would be warranted, particularly as crossing movements of Eastern Avenue are likely to take place at both ends of the site, not in a single central location. Provision of a pedestrian phase at the traffic lights would serve little purpose as it is not on any 'desire line'. The application contains no indication that it is proposed to move the site accesses from their existing locations at the north-west corner and at the eastern end but it is considered that a condition should be imposed requiring details of access into the site to be submitted and agreed. The comments of WSCC, as the local highway authority, are awaited.

Recommendation

Subject to consideration of the comments of County Transport Planning Services and any other representations received by 6 December 2007, APPROVE for the reason:-

The proposal would enhance the facilities on this public open space and provide a valuable recreational facility for the community without resulting in unacceptable effects on other users of the open space or nearby commercial and business premises. It can take place without causing unacceptable detriment to highway safety. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AR1) or the West Sussex Structure Plan (DEV1, NE11-12, DEV4).

Subject to :-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C11A3 (Hard and soft landscaping scheme to be submitted, approved and implemented)
3. Prior to commencement of development, details of the external surfaces and finishes of the proposed development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA and construction shall be completed in accordance with such details as approved prior to commencement of use of the facility.
4. C12A3 (Facing of walls to conform to sample panel) (amended)
5. C14Gii (Details of lighting to be submitted and approved) (amended)
6. Prior to commencement of development, details of access to the facility shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA and construction of such access (and closure of any existing accesses) shall be completed in accordance with such details as approved prior to commencement of use of the facility.

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