Application Number: ADC/0116/07 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: Southwick Recreation Ground, Southwick

Proposal: New extreme sports youth facility area for the local skateboarders, BMX riders and In-line skaters (ADC Reg 3)

The Application

The application, submitted by this Council, relates to a 176sqm area of land on the south side of the Recreation Ground, lying between the railway and footpath (which runs from Croft Avenue to the footbridge over the railway line, at the most south-eastern part of the recreation ground). The proposed site is located 100m from No.46 Croft Avenue to the west and 195m from the Adur Indoor Bowls Club to the east.

The proposal is for a new extreme sports facility which would cater for the local skateboarders, BMX riders and in-line skaters.

The existing skateboard, approved in 2000 (SW/15/00) is located on the immediate west of the Adur Indoor Bowls Club building. A BMX dirt track was installed at a later date on the south side of the Bowling Club building.

Permission had earlier been granted for a skateboard facility adjacent to the railway on the former children's playground (SW/55/99) but was not implemented because of an adjoining above-ground electrical cabin.

Consultations and Representations

Director of Services: The EHO has no objection

Third Parties: A letter has been received from No.61 Old Barn Way who objects on grounds that:-
- the site is unacceptable as there are several 'brownfield' sites within the park that have not been used for several years that could accommodate the facility, including the waste ground between the Bowling Club and Southwick F.C., the tennis courts on the north of the park and waste ground to the west of the MS centre in the NW of the Park.
- the need for the new facility is questioned when the existing one is only used by a few people, in the evenings and at weekends. They comment that only a low number of people took an interest in choosing the facility at consultation stage, which is a small figure taking into consideration the population around the park.
- the proposed new location is the only part of the park that can be used by people walking dogs, jogging and kids playing, when the football pitches are in use.

NB. The Group Manager Adur Watch & Parks Service states that prior to submitting the planning application public consultation was carried out in the form of an exhibition at Southwick Leisure Centre. 84 questionnaires were returned with 81 people being in favour of the proposals and only 3 against them.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-16 (WSCC 2005): DEV1, NE11
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996): AG1, AR1
Adur Development Plan – Submission Core Strategy 2006-26 (ADC 2007): CI1, ENV1
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (OPDM 2005)
PPG17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' (ODPM 2002)

Planning Assessment

Policies

In principle, the proposal is considered to accord with planning policies.

The objectives of PPG17 are to support urban renaissance and promote social inclusion and community cohesion through well planned and maintained open spaces; to support health and well being and promote sustainability through easily accessible development.

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. DEV1 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 uses and activities.

Policy AR1 of the Local Plan 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. ENV1 of the Submission Core Strategy similarly protects open spaces.

Effect on other users of the recreation ground

The objector states that the location of the proposals would prevent the use of the land between the footpath and the railway embankment from being used by dog walkers, joggers and children playing. The proposal itself would take up only 8m of the 33m width between the footpath and railway, leaving 25m for other activities to go on which is considered to be adequate.

The proposed facility would be 176sqm in size, whereas the existing skateboard facility and informal BMX track total 880sqm. The existing facilities

would be levelled and turned to grass with a net gain of 704sqm in grassed park area.

Residential amenity

The original unimplemented permission for a similar-sized facility related to a site located 40m from the nearest residential property. The location of the existing facility, adjacent to the Indoor Bowls Club, is located 88m from the nearest residential properties.

The closest properties to the proposed site under this application would be 100m away to the west, at the end of Croft Avenue, and 90m to the south, on the opposite side of the railway, in The Gardens. These properties are screened to some extent from the proposals. The properties in Croft Avenue have high evergreen hedges on their east side boundary with the park, this boundary is also tree lined. The properties to the south have back gardens which are split in two by an access track which runs east to west, with most of the properties having a garage located in the portion of garden adjacent to the railway embankment. On the north side of the railway trees line the edge of the park.

The distances from the nearby residences to the site are sufficiently great that there would not be a significant potential adverse effect on the enjoyment of these homes or their gardens through noise associated with the use of the proposed facility.

No provision for illuminating the site has been made and it would therefore only be used during daylight hours.

Visual amenity

The proposed concrete structure would be 22.3m wide, by 8m deep, by 1.5m in height at its lowest point up to 2.4m in height at its highest. The proposal would be a substitute for the existing skateboard ramp and BMX track adjacent to the Indoor Bowls Club. The proposed facility has been designed to have a grassed run-off verge on both the west and east sides to prevent the structure from appearing visually out of keeping with its surroundings, and to improve its safety. A number of small trees and shrubs have already been planted on the east of the site by a local volunteer group, and it is proposed that more trees would be planted on the west side of the site to again soften the visual effect of the proposal.

Other matters

The other sites mentioned by the objector are unable to be utilised for the proposals due to the restricted access that members of the public would have to the land leased by the Indoor Bowls Club and the Leisure Centre. The MS Centre has recently been granted permission to extend onto the land to its west. The locations mentioned are also closer to residential properties.

As regards need, contrary to the contentions of the objector, the Head of Adur Watch & Parks states that a survey showed users totalling 84 on Saturday and 142 on Sunday and that the existing facility is ranked highest in usage above all Adur Parks facilities. Extensive research and consultation has resulted in the selection of the current site and design, which is considered to be more accessible for its users, and would result in less conflict between the users and other facilities in the recreation ground, without any adverse effects being felt by other members of the park community.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason that:-

The proposal would provide a valuable recreational facility for the community without resulting in unacceptable detriment to the amenities of residential properties or to other uses of the recreation ground. It would consequently not conflict with the relevant policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AR1), the adopted West Sussex Structure Plan (DEV1, NE11) and the Adur Development Plan Submission Core Strategy (CI1, ENV1)

Subject to:-

1. C1Ci (Standard time limit)
2. C11A3 (Landscaping scheme)

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