Application Number: AWDM/0201/15 **Recommendation – APPROVE**

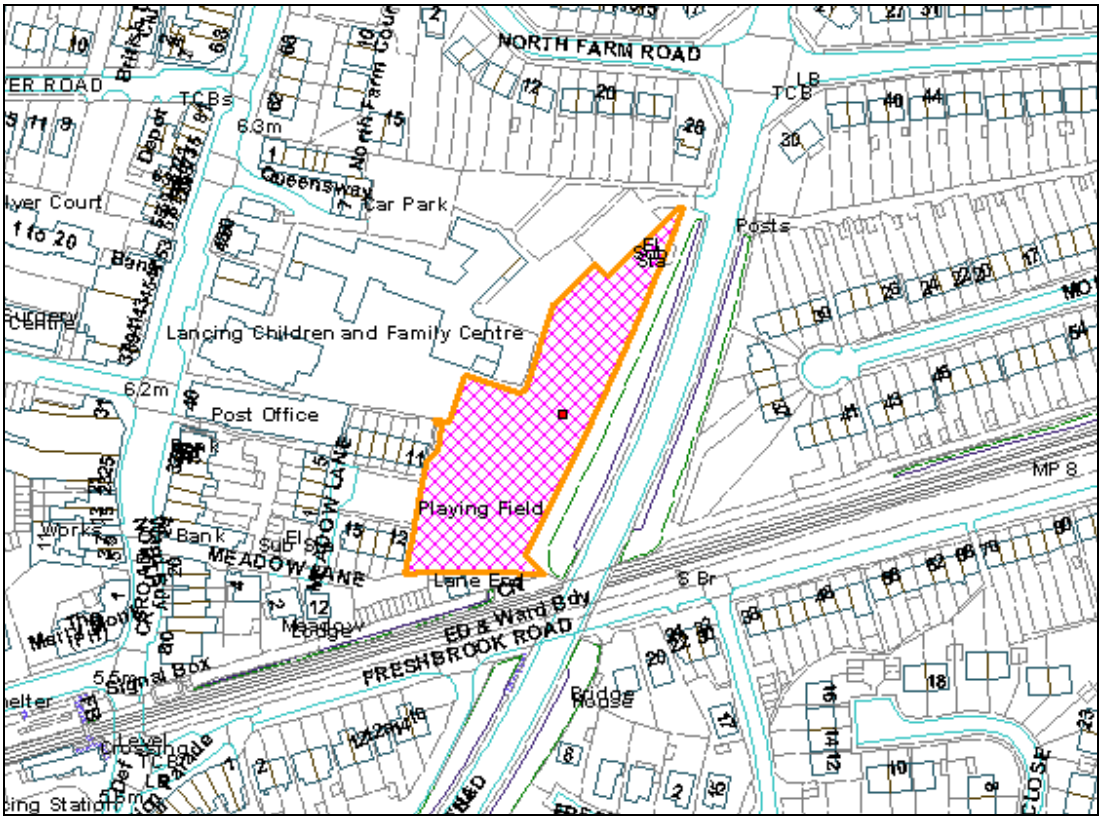
Site: **Land East of 126 Grinstead Lane, Lancing, West Sussex**

Proposal: **Construction of new 2-storey multi-purpose community centre incorporating an external climbing wall max 14m high, and associated landscaping and bicycle storage**

Applicant: Mrs Marion Peskett

Ward: Mash Barn

Case Officer: Peter Barnett



Not to Scale

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Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to the playing field at the former Freshbrook School site. The proposal, submitted by Electric Storm Youth Ltd (a registered charity based in Lancing), is for a substantial multi-purpose community building on the north-eastern part of the site, adjacent to Grinstead Lane and south of the existing site access and existing 22-space car park. The former school buildings are now used as the Lancing Childrens &

Family Centre (on the North Road side) and the Links College South. The application site area is 0.45 hectare and comprises the existing playing field (with the main rectangular playing field to the south retained) but excludes the car park and the tarmac forecourt to the west. There is an existing dense line of leylandii conifers along the eastern boundary of the site, at the foot of the embankment leading up to the bridge over the railway, most of which would be removed.

Planning permission was granted for the building in August 2011 (AWDM/0347/11) but the consent has now lapsed, hence the need for the current application. The proposed building (1095 square metres) comprises a large multi-purpose hall (531sqm), equal to 4 badminton courts, with ancillary accommodation on two floors, comprising meeting rooms, sound studio, IT suite, club space, multi-gym, changing rooms, WCs and other service facilities plus a base for Police community support officers. An external climbing wall is also incorporated into the design.

The main hall (34m by 16m) has walls of synthetic rainscreen cladding and an assymetric curved 'green' roof, 9m high overall, with its highest edge (8m) facing the road. The rest of the building, on the east and north sides, is brick-built with a 'green' flat roof and is mainly two-storey (height 6.3m), with single storey elements (3-3.5m high). There are extensive areas of glazing on the building.

The reinforced concrete climbing wall is on the north side of the building, adjacent to the car park. It is shown tapering upwards from 7m to 14m in overall height on its northern edge, with the actual climbing surface (on east side only) being 10.5m tall and 4.5m wide, and with name lettering 'ESY' above.

The applicants state that the facility will fulfil their vision through fund raising efforts of creating a facility to direct young people's energies towards safe and healthy activities and away from harmful influences. They state that extensive research has been carried out to identify the activities for which provision should be made in this new building and it has been designed accordingly. It would be able to provide for a number of activities such as skateboarding (using portable ramps), BMX, indoor football, badminton, bowls, parcour (free running), dance classes, scout meetings, bands and cinema. To be viable, it would not solely be for young people; during school hours, they hope that non-school users would take advantage of the facilities. The hall is designed to be divided by folding partition into 2 parts for different users.

Relevant Planning History

AWDM/0347/11 – Two-storey multi-purpose community centre incorporating an external climbing wall max 14m high – Approved

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: The ***Highway Authority*** has stated that it is unclear from the application if the likely intensification in the number of right hand turns into the

site will create highway safety issues. It is noted that the existing layout of Grinstead Lane is wide enough to allow cars turning right to enter the hatched area of the pedestrian crossing to wait but how often this could be used is not evidenced.

It has requested that a Transport Statement is submitted including information on the proposed number of trips to and from the site in both directions.

Adur & Worthing Councils: The ***Environmental Health*** officer recommends that the opening hours be limited to Monday – Friday 08.00 to 22.30hrs, Saturdays – 10:00 to 22:30hrs, Sunday & Bank Holidays 12.00 to 21.00hrs.

The building should be constructed in a way to contain noise. The large areas of glazing should be fixed and doors closed when music is played. The Officer has requested that the applicant confirms this and forwards details of the proposed glazing and brief description of the proposed ventilation particularly as the main glazed façade is south facing.

Also recommends conditions to control hours of construction, dust suppression, external plant, lighting and kitchen extraction.

The ***Tree and Landscape Officer*** has no objection.

The ***Engineer*** states that the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and appears to be slightly affected by surface water flooding. He has requested a condition requiring details of surface water drainage.

Sussex Police: No comments received

Lancing Parish Council: No objection but consideration should be given to moving the entrance and exit away from the vicinity of the pedestrian crossing.

Sport England: No objection. The site is not considered to form part of, or constitute a playing field as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (Statutory Instrument 2010 No.2184) because it is not capable of accommodating a pitch of at least 0.2 hectares, therefore Sport England has considered this a non-statutory consultation. It is understood this area to the south of the proposed building has previously provided some level of informal sport, therefore the Council need to satisfy itself that the proposal complies with the criteria set out in Paragraph 74 of the NPPF which states:

"Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*

- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss."*

Representations

3 letters of objection received:

- Area is unsuitable for the proposal
- Meadow Lane is a quiet residential area with elderly residents
- Increased noise and disturbance
- Lack of parking
- Loss of trees
- Removal of trees will increase traffic noise
- Loss of privacy from climbing wall
- Loss of light
- What will stop people from encroaching onto playing field or damaging garden fences?
- Will there be supervision of climbing wall?

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AR7, ACS5
National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

Relevant Legislation

The Committee should consider the planning application in accordance with:
Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) that provides the application may be granted either unconditionally or subject to relevant conditions, or refused. Regard shall be given to relevant development plan policies, any relevant local finance considerations, and other material considerations; and
Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that requires the decision to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning Assessment

Principle

In the Local Plan, this site is located within the area covered by the Lancing town centre Inset Plan but is not identified for any particular use or development. There is no policy specifically protecting the use of the site for education purposes. Loss of playing fields

is a relevant consideration but Sport England has no objection as it was not previously capable of accommodating a pitch of at least 0.2 hectares. The part of the site where the building is to be erected is a narrow northward protrusion, leaving the main grassed playing area to the south available. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed use would provide an important and valuable facility which outweighs the loss of this small area of playing field.

There is no land-use objection in principle to the proposed sports and recreational use and, taking account of saved policies ACS5 and AR7, it is supportable in principle.

As the proposal represents a resubmission of a recently lapsed approval, it is considered that unless there are specific material changes in circumstances since permission was previously given, then the application is acceptable in principle.

Visual amenity

The proposal would be a striking contemporary building particularly with the incorporation into its design of a tapering 14m high climbing wall. As it involves removing most of the existing tall conifer screen hedge (except at its southern end), the building and climbing wall would be prominent in public views from Grinstead Lane where it crosses the railway (the road being 1m-5m higher than the site of the proposed building). The climbing wall, which would be closest to the backs of the houses in North Farm Road, is very tall and would be a dominant feature but not one, it is considered, that would necessarily warrant refusal.

It is not considered that the removal of the conifers, or other small trees, would be detrimental to the local environment, particularly as the proposal would include more suitable new planting. The conifers at the southern end would be retained, together with a group of larger deciduous trees further south (although one of these, a Norway maple, appears to need to be removed because it has a split trunk and may be unsafe).

In the Design and Access Statement, the architect states that the form of the building consists of three key elements which interlock to create a visually dynamic series of forms – the 3 elements are the large multi-purpose activities hall, a cluster of multi-purpose rooms and the outdoor climbing wall – the latter is a prominent feature "intended to act as a signpost for the centre, attracting attention from the street and making a strong impression on visitors entering the site". He states that the elevations of the building will incorporate modern materials which age well, are low maintenance and which give the appearance of solidity and permanence rather than the temporary appearance often associated with sports and leisure facilities – the proposed materials include high-quality red brick, inert rain-screen cladding panels, polyester-coated aluminium window and door frames, curtain walling and 'green' roofing which, together with new planting, will soften its appearance.

It is not considered that there is any reason to disagree with the above statements, subject to approval of the details of the materials (including the surface treatment of the

reinforced concrete climbing wall). At present the former school site turns its back onto the main road whereas the proposed development would provide a frontage and a distinctive modern feature changing the image of this southern part of Grinstead Lane which currently has fairly undistinguished buildings.

Residential amenity – effect on existing dwellings

The proposed building itself would not be so close or tall as to cause an unacceptable impact, in terms of loss of light, overlooking or overbearing impact, on the nearest houses which are in North Farm Road to the north. The houses directly to the north have timber screen fences and outbuildings about 2.5m-3m high on their rear boundaries, those further west have a taller hedge acting as a screen.

The 14m tall climbing wall is the nearest part of the building to the houses and is shown 28m from the boundary with the rear gardens of the houses and approximately 50m from the houses themselves. As the climbing surface is only on the east side (facing Grinstead Lane), anyone scaling to the upper half of the climbing surface (10.5m high overall) would be able to see across to the rear windows of the end 2 houses (No's 26 and 28). However, the 50m separation distance from the principal rear windows of the houses, and the separation distance to the rear gardens, is considered to be sufficient to prevent a loss of privacy to residents. Furthermore, the applicant has previously advised that people using the climbing wall at the heights shown will be concentrating entirely on the climb itself rather than wishing to overlook residents.

The use of the building and climbing wall has some potential to cause disturbance to the neighbouring houses but there is already an existing 22-space car park closest to the boundary. The existing car park would already generate some noise, including slamming car doors and if people congregate. The main concern is to avoid noise during periods when residents expect to be able to sleep free from disturbance and, to a lesser extent, evenings and weekends, when residents of the houses have a reasonable expectation to be able to enjoy peace and quiet in their rear gardens.

Hours of operation of the youth centre are planned to be from 4pm on weekdays until 10pm on Mon-Thurs and 10.30pm on Fridays. On Saturdays it will be open from 10am-10pm and on Sundays from 12 noon -9pm. It is considered that these periods are reasonable and that a condition should be imposed accordingly but allowing for additional day time use by the wider community from 8am Mondays-Fridays (except public holidays which should be the same as Sunday hours). The extent and hours of use of the playing field is unclear and further information has been sought from the applicant.

Sufficient site security will be important and information is also being sought from the applicant on this point.

Accessibility and parking

The site is in a highly sustainable location, being very close to facilities in central Lancing and to public transport links including the station. It is within easy walking and cycling distance of extensive residential areas. From this point of view, it is a suitable location for the use proposed, enabling users to have a choice of modes of travel and not to be reliant on car travel.

Under the adopted West Sussex Parking Standard 1,095sqm of floor area used for Class D2 purposes such as indoor multi-purpose facilities, would require a maximum of 50 car parking spaces. However, given that the proposal is in such a sustainable central location and is aimed mainly at young people without cars, it would not be justified to expect such a large amount of car parking provision.

The existing 22-space car park will serve the proposal (in addition to the Links College South) and the applicants state that it is likely that the tarmac forecourt of the latter will be available for overspill parking in the evenings and weekends. 2 spaces will be widened to cater for disabled persons. A shelter for 16 cycles is proposed.

The existing access to Grinstead Lane appears suitable to cater for the development, being relatively wide and with adequate visibility of both pedestrians and vehicles. The Pelican crossing immediately to the north, apart from enabling safe access to the site for pedestrians from the residential area to the east, also tends to reduce traffic speeds.

The previous application was considered to be acceptable in highway terms. Nevertheless, the additional information requested by the Highway Authority is in the process of being submitted and the final views of West Sussex County Council are therefore unavailable at the present time. It is therefore recommended that the final decision should not be issued until the WSCC is satisfied with the proposal on highway grounds.

Sustainable and resource efficient buildings

The design features included are the use of ‘green’ roof technology to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and increase opportunities for biodiversity. Subject to further investigation, the applicants state that grey-water recycling and photovoltaic or solar thermal panels could be included and that engineers will be appointed to create a detailed sustainable energy strategy. They state that materials will be from sustainable sources.

Recommendation

Subject to the submission of further information about the use of the playing field, site security and a transport statement and the subsequent receipt of further comments from West Sussex Highways, APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Standard 3 year time limit
2. Details of boundary fences/walls
3. Cycle parking
4. Travel Plan to be implemented
5. Construction Method Statement to be submitted
6. Landscaping
7. External materials and finishes
8. The premises shall not be open for use other than between the hours of 8am and 10pm Mondays to Thursdays, 8am and 10.30pm Fridays, 10am and 10pm Saturdays and 12noon and 9pm Sundays and public holidays and the site shall be secured outside these hours in accordance with details to be submitted
9. No external lighting without approval
10. Details of any external plant, extraction system and ventilation system
11. Surface water drainage details to be submitted
12. Details of sustainability measures
13. Approved plans

and any further conditions which may be required following receipt of the additional information.

13th April 2015