Planning Committee: 21 July 2015 **Item Number: 13**

Application No: W/15/0677

Registration Date: 01/05/15
Town/Parish Council: Barford **Expiry Date:** 26/06/15
Case Officer: Anne Denby
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Land at Barford Playing Fields, Church Lane, Barford
Renovation and improvement of existing playing fields including renewal and enlargement of children's play area, reinstatement of football pitch, construction of multi-activity court, construction of artificial turf court, construction of disabled access toilet and store, installation of perimeter and access footpaths, renovation/upgrading of access track along with services provision and ancillary "park furniture" FOR Barford, Sherbourne & Wasperton Joint Parish Council

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This application is being presented to Committee due to the number of objections received.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the application be granted.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is for the renovation and improvement of the existing playing fields and includes:

- the renewal and enlargement of the children's play area
- reinstatement of football pitch construction of multi-activity court
- construction of artificial turf court
- construction of disabled access, toilet and store
- installation of perimeter and access footpaths
- renovation/upgrading of access track along with services provision and ancillary "park furniture"

The works are being carried out by Barford Parish Council and as such the majority of the works above are to be implemented under Permitted Development Rights. under Part 12 of the GPDO. The only elements of the proposals which fall outside of permitted development are:

Fencing proposed to the Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) and all-weather pitch:
Reason - this exceeds 2m in height.
The fencing will be 3m high green powder-coated rigid mesh fencing with 2no. access gates. The MUGA is to be located within the south-east corner of the existing playing field and will measure 39.6m by 29.6m. The all-weather pitch is to be located adjacent to the southern site boundary towards the west of the site and will measure 39.6m by 14.6m.

Resurfacing of a section of the existing lane: Reason – this falls outside of the ownership of the Parish Council.
The existing lane runs adjacent to the western boundary of the playing fields on a north-south alignment. The lane is 2.7m in width and will be re-surfaced with tarmacadam.

Children's play equipment: Reason – in part this exceeds 4m in height
The area occupied by the play area will be increased and the area enclosed with 1m high hoop-topped fencing. A range of play equipment is proposed with 1no. piece of equipment exceeding 4m in height. This is to be located centrally within the extended play area and consists of a centre stage platform area, the roof of which will be a maximum 5.95m in height. A rope climbing section is also proposed which will be a maximum 4m in height.

This assessment of the application is therefore limited to the above 3 elements only.

The application is supported by the following documents:

Supporting Statement - provides details on the background to the formulation of the improvement works and the public consultations / community engagement that has been carried out. Details the proposed scheme and how it has been designed with regard to the character of the Conservation Area and impact on adjacent residential properties. Identifies the links with the wider Warwick District Sustainable Community Strategy *'A Shared Vision'* and states the plan is to link the scheme to the priorities identified. Sets out details on management and organisation stating that ultimate responsibility for the playing fields and the project is with the joint Parish Council and a 'Playing Fields Working Party' has been set up to manage the delivery and day-day running of the facilities.

Trees Strategy - Provides general details on works required to existing trees. These predominately include general cutting back, crown lifts to some to ensure pedestrian access, mower access and facilitate new pathway / all-weather court installation and minimise compromise of store, shelter, skate park area and access from allotment path.

Technical and Design Detail - provides detail on the specification of the proposed improvement works.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The application site relates to an existing playing field which covers approximately 2 hectares and is located to the south of Church Lane in the village of Barford.

The main site access is via an unadopted track from Church Lane, however, there are pedestrian links from the adjacent Church and through to the wider surrounding area to the south, including allotments.

The site is predominately laid to grass with timber fencing to the western boundary with the remaining boundaries being predominately boundary hedging and tree planting.

To the western site boundary is an enclosed children's play area, with play equipment including slides / swings and associated street furniture, benches / bins.

The site adjoins the rear gardens of properties on Church Lane to the north and the cemetery is located adjacent to the north-east boundary of the playing field. The boundary with the cemetery is marked by a post and rail fence, substantial hedge planting and intermittent mature trees.

PLANNING HISTORY

W/14/1781 - Renovation and improvement of existing playing fields including renewal and enlargement of children's play area, reinstatement of football pitch, construction of multi-activity court, construction of artificial turf court, construction of disabled access toilet and store, installation of perimeter and access footpaths, renovation/upgrading of access track along with services provision and ancillary "park furniture" - Withdrawn, 12th March 2015.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework
- The Current Local Plan
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP6 - Access (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP8 - Protection of Conservation Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- RAP13 - Directing New Outdoor Leisure and Recreation Development (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- The Emerging Local Plan
- BE1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- BE3 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- TR1 - Access and Choice (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- HE2 - Protection of Conservation Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- Guidance Documents
- Barford Village Design Statement (September 2009)
- Open Space (Supplementary Planning Document - June 2009)

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Sport England: No objection

WCC Ecology: No objection, subject to inclusion of informative notes

WCC Rights of Way Officer: No objection, subject to inclusion of informative notes

Public Response:

8no. letters of objection have been received, the details of which can be summarised as follows:

- Concern with the amount of crown lifting necessary for the all-weather sports area and tennis/bowls court
- Improvements are unnecessary and will impact on the largely unspoiled space.
- Proposals will result in a 'concrete jungle' with no room for pure adventure.
- Proposals restrict dog walking.
- Proposals are excessive and primarily for use by the school. The field should be left as it is and proposals should not restrict its current use.
- Overdevelopment of the site.
- No parking is planned as part of the proposals.
- Proposals need to be scaled back.

8no. letters of support have been received, the details of which can be summarised as follows:

- Existing park is very dated and the proposals are a massive improvement to the present facilities.
- Will provide facilities in the village such as tennis/football that currently do not exist. Many people have to travel outside of the village to access such facilities.
- Provision of toilet/disabled facilities will increase the inclusiveness of the facilities.
- Proposals will not change use of the park for dog walking.
- Important for the whole community, including new homes being built, as centre of village life.
- Increase activities available for all ages.
- Important to improve facilities given rise in childhood obesity.
- Reduce the need to travel.
- A committee or club should be set up to manage the fields and raise funds for maintenance.

Assessment

The main issues in consideration of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on character of surrounding area
- Impact on neighbouring properties
- Health and Wellbeing
- Other Matters

Principle of development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to provide access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation for local communities as they can make an important contribution to health and wellbeing. It states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless certain exceptions apply (Paras 73 & 74).

The current proposals for the fencing and children's play area will result in a reduction in the area of the existing playing fields. However, the proposals are considered to meet two of the exceptions set out in the NPPF as 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 and the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

The site is located within the rural area of the District where Policy RAP13 applies. This states that development of outdoor leisure and recreation facilities will only be permitted in certain circumstances. The proposals are considered to accord with this policy as the proposals are relatively small scale outdoor leisure and recreation developments adjacent to the existing settlement to meet the needs of the local community.

An earlier scheme for improvements to the playing fields was withdrawn due to an objection from Sport England. The objection centred on the ability to retain an adult sized football pitch at the site. Following the withdrawal of that application the applicants have consulted with Sport England and ensured that such a pitch can be retained. Sport England have subsequently stated that, on balance, they consider the benefits of the MUGA and the all-weather pitch, together with the future potential to formally lay out an adult pitch are sufficient to mitigate the loss of the playing field in this particular instance. Sport England therefore considers that the proposed development broadly meets with their policy exception test and they therefore raise no objections to the proposals.

The proposals are therefore considered to accord with the aforementioned policies.

Impact on character of surrounding area and Conservation Area.

Policy DAP8 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 states that development will be required to preserve or enhance the special architectural and historic interest and appearance of Conservation areas and respect their setting and important views both in and out of them.

Policy DP1 requires developments to positively contribute to the character and quality of their environment through good layout and design. Developments are expected to demonstrate that they harmonise with, or enhance the existing settlement and relate well to the character of the surrounding area adopting appropriate material and details.

The Barford Design Guide states that all efforts should be made to maintain and enhance open spaces and the views from them, particularly those with public access. Compromise should be avoided wherever possible, with exceptions only allowed where there is clearly demonstrable public benefit, as shown over the part of the Village Green sacrificed to provide space for the new Barford Village Shop. The Guide states that in relation to playing fields, since these are held in trust, there can and will be no development unless directly associated with their function as a recreational area under the total control of the JPC.

The site is located within the Barford Conservation Area. The Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted and has commented that the proposals will clearly have an impact on the existing playing field as the facilities are to be significantly upgraded. Concerns have been raised that the way the park has been laid out is akin to an urban park rather than a village playing field and the need for footpaths all around the football pitch and fencing to the children's play area has been questioned. However, these elements of the overall proposals are to be carried out under permitted development and cannot therefore be considered as part of this current application.

The MUGA and all-weather pitch have been positioned to the rear of the playing field in order to retain the open nature of the playing field. The southern boundaries are well landscaped with the land level beyond rising. The fencing proposed to these areas will be 3m high mesh fencing colour coated in green. Views from the south will be restricted by existing planting and changes in land levels. The fencing will be viewed against a backdrop of existing vegetation and due to its design and colour will not constitute a conspicuous and incongruous addition that would detrimentally impact on the character of the surrounding area.

There are currently open views from the adjacent cemetery into the playing fields. The play equipment and all-weather pitch will be visible from this area, however, they are considered to be at a sufficient distance to ensure that they are not visually intrusive. The proposed MUGA is located directly adjacent to the cemetery; however, there is substantial planting to the southern boundary of the cemetery which will screen the fencing from view.

The children's play equipment that exceeds 4m in height will be visible from the surrounding area. It does, however, replace existing equipment and whilst this is lower than the proposed, the use of this area for equipped children's play is an accepted part of the established character of the area. The Conservation Officer has stated that the choice and colour of the play equipment would need to be conditioned. There is only 1no. piece of equipment that requires permission and it would not therefore be appropriate to condition the choice of other equipment to be provided. A condition is proposed to require details on the colour finish, however, it is recognised that the applicants may well be restricted on the available choices given the nature of the equipment to be installed.

The existing lane is already in part surfaced with tarmacadam and therefore whilst the proposals to re-surface its entire length will reduce some of its rural qualities it is not considered to detrimentally impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

The proposals are being put forward by the Parish Council who have carried out public consultation in respect of the proposals. The improvements subject of this application will impact on the character of the Conservation Area. However, it is considered that the improvements have been sited in the most appropriate locations within the site to minimise their overall impact to the character of the area and adjacent residential properties. The public benefits set out above are considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposals are therefore considered to accord with the aforementioned policies.

Impact on neighbouring properties

Policy DP2 of the Warwick District local Plan 1996-2011 states that development will not be permitted which has an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of nearby uses and residents and/or does not provide acceptable standards of amenity for future users/occupiers of the development.

The proposed fencing to the MUGA and all-weather pitch is located towards the southern boundary of the site at the furthest point from nearby residential properties. The children's play equipment will be the closest structure to nearby residential properties, however, sufficient separation distances will be retained and the proposed equipment above 4m in height is not considered to be visually intrusive when viewed from adjacent properties and is not considered to result in any overlooking that would result in material harm to residential amenity.

The use of the area for equipped children's play is already established and whilst the expansion of this area and improved equipment will inevitably increase its usage, it is not considered to be to a level sufficient to warrant refusal of this application. The MUGA and all-weather pitch will also increase use of the existing playing fields, however, the assessment of this application is limited to the fencing to these areas and this is not considered to result in harm to neighbouring properties.

The proposals also include a practise wall to the MUGA. Although located in a corner of the site, it was felt that the solid construction of this wall could have an adverse impact on the visual amenities of the surrounding area and its use for tennis practise could lead to noise and general disturbance to nearby residential properties and visitors to the adjacent cemetery. The wall is shown at 2.5m in height and to be of solid concrete construction. The applicants have been asked to provide further details on this and potential wall coverings to reduce any noise /visual impact and an update will be provided at the meeting.

The proposals are therefore considered acceptable and accord with the aforementioned policies.

Health and Wellbeing

The proposals will significantly improve the outdoor sports / recreation facilities on offer in the village. This will aid in achieving specific priorities of the NPPF and those set out in the Warwick District Sustainable Community Strategy' A Shared Vision' by increasing opportunities for participation in sports/outdoor recreation within the local area and also reduce dependency on the car.

Other Matters

Concerns have been received in relation to the use of the playing fields by dog walkers. Whilst this is not necessarily a material planning consideration, it is not considered that the proposals subject of this application would restrict the overall use of the playing fields. The fencing proposed is to the site boundaries with footpaths being provided around the play areas. The main central area of the playing fields remains open grass thereby ensuring that access for all is maintained.

Summary/Conclusion

The proposals are being put forward by the Parish Council who have carried out public consultation in respect of the proposals. The improvements subject of this application will have a less than substantial impact on the character of the Conservation Area as the improvements have been sited in the most appropriate locations within the site to minimise their overall impact to the character of the area and adjacent residential properties. However, the public benefits will outweigh the harm to heritage assets and therefore planning permission should be granted.

CONDITIONS

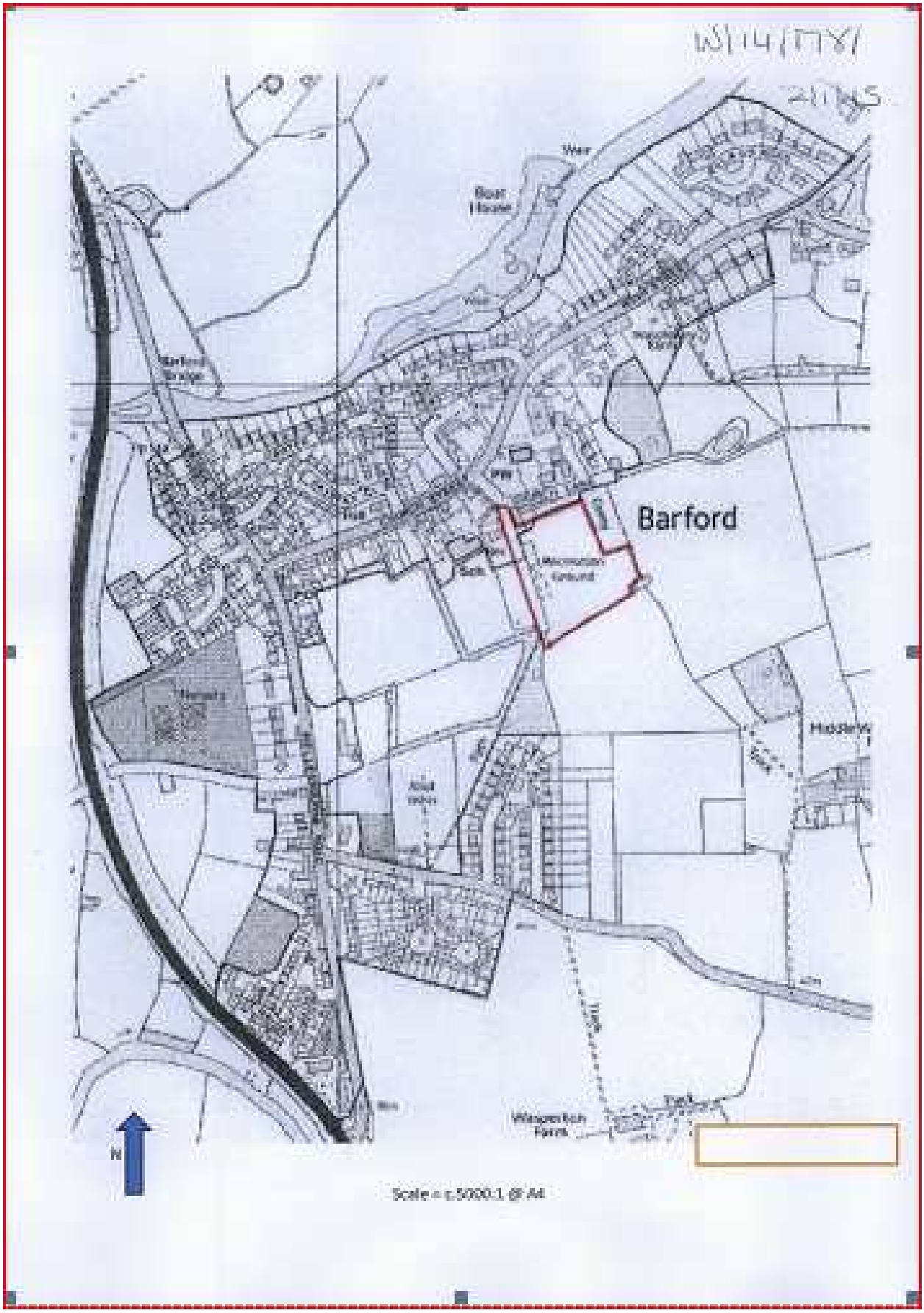
1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission. **REASON:** To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown on the site location plan and approved drawings 3124-01 Rev E; Q3374_Profile; Q3374_D3124-01 Rev A; Barford Playing Fields(King George's Field) Fencing Proposal and specification contained therein, submitted on 1st May 2015. **REASON** : For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1 and DP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

3 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in full accordance with sample details of the colour finishes for the proposed play equipment and fencing which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. **REASON:** To ensure that the proposed development has a satisfactory external appearance in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy DP1 & DA8 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

4 No development or other operations (including demolition, site clearance or other preparatory works) shall be commenced until adequate steps, which shall have been previously approved in writing by the local planning authority, have been taken to safeguard against damage or injury during construction works (in accordance with Clause 7 of British Standard BS5837- 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction) to all tree(s) on the site, or those tree(s) whose root structure may extend within the site and which are within the Warwick District Council Barford Conservation Area. In particular no excavations, site works, trenches or channels shall be cut or pipes or services laid, no fires shall be lit within 10 metres of the nearest point of the canopy of any protected tree(s); no equipment, machinery or structure shall be attached to or supported by a protected tree(s); no mixing of cement or use of other contaminating materials or substances shall take place within, or close enough to, a root protection area that seepage or displacement could cause them to enter a root protection

area, or any other works be carried out in such a way as to cause damage or injury to the tree(s) by interference with their root structure and that no soil or waste shall be deposited on the land in such a position as to be likely to cause damage or injury to the tree(s).
REASON: To protect those trees which are of significant amenity value to the area and which would provide an enhanced standard of appearance to the development in accordance with Policy DP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.


Barford
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