QUEENS LINKS BOWLING GREEN, LINKS ROAD

PROPOSED USE OF LAND AS ADVENTURE SPORTS GROUND, WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND BOUNDARY TREATMENT/FLOODLIGHTING PROPOSALS

For: Transition Extreme

Application Ref.: P110586  Advert: Section 34 -Proj. Pub.
Application Date: 27/04/2011  Concern:
Officer: Tommy Hart  Advertised on: 11/05/2011
Ward: George Street/Harbour (J Hunter/A May/J Stewart)  Committee Date: 30 June 2011
Committee Date: 30 June 2011  Community Council:

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions
DESCRIPTION
The application site forms part of the car park area for Transition Extreme, a small area of landscaping and also former bowling greens and club house. The bowling greens and club house have lain vacant since closing after the 2007 bowling season. The clubhouse is boarded up. The 2m high boundary chain link fence and hedges remain mostly intact. To the south of the site is the Transition Extreme indoor sports centre and the associated carpark is to the immediate east of that building. There are residential flats located to the west and south west of the application site, whilst the majority of the other nearby land is open green space including a play park.

HISTORY
Planning ref A5/0096 for proposed indo skate & BMX park, climbing wall, visitor centre for extreme sport with associated retail units was approved conditionally by the Development Management Sub-Committee in March 2005.

PROPOSAL
It is proposed firstly to demolish the existing clubhouse and remove the bowling greens. In this area, it is proposed to construct a dirt bike track and also an outdoor rope adventure area. The existing chain link fence would be renewed and 6no floodlights of around 15m in height would be erected. An access gate would be incorporated at the western side adjacent to the Transition Extreme building. Some landscaping would be removed and the existing car park would be re-modelled in order to make room for an additional 25 car parking spaces and a secure cycle rack, which would be accessed from the existing car park.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO SUB-COMMITTEE
The application site is currently under the ownership of Aberdeen City Council and therefore, in terms of the Council’s Scheme of Delegation, the application must be determined by by the Development Management Sub-Committee.

CONSULTATIONS
ROADS SECTION – no objections after receiving amended parking layout and drainage details
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – no objections but ask for conditions attached to any grant of approval restricting hours of construction and also that the floodlights are angled and of a power that will reduce/eliminate any potential light pollution escape outwith the perimeter of the site
COMMUNITY COUNCIL – no comments received
SPORTSCOTLAND – no objections after receiving information relating to the former usage of the bowling green and what is available elsewhere in the city. It is noted that as the proposal would encourage physical activity, Sport Scotland would support the application.

REPRESENTATIONS
No representations have been received.

PLANNING POLICY
The site lies within an area designated as Urban Green Space (policy 36). Local Plan policy 48 (Sports Facilities) and paragraph 156 of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) in relation to redevelopment of playing fields and sports pitches are also applicable.
EVALUATION

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that in determining a planning application, regard must be had to the Development Plan. Determination shall be made in accordance with the Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan consists of the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan and the Aberdeen Local Plan.

Local Plan policy 36 (Urban Green) states permission will not be granted to use or redevelop any parks, playing fields, sports pitches, allotments or all other areas of urban green space (including smaller spaces not identified on the Proposals Map) for any use other than recreation or sport unless an equivalent and equally convenient area for public access is laid out and made available in the locality by the applicant for urban green space purposes. In all cases, development will only be acceptable provided that; 1. There is no significant loss to the landscape character and amenity of the site and adjoining areas; 2. Access is either maintained or enhanced; 3. The site is of no significant wildlife or heritage value; and 4. There is no loss of established or mature trees. In terms of policy 36, it is considered that there is no conflict. Given its location adjacent to the Transition Extreme building, there would be no adverse impact on landscape character or amenity of the surrounding area. Access to the site would be as existing. The land has no significant wildlife or heritage value and there would be no loss of established or mature trees.

The criteria in Local Plan policy 36 are emphasised by paragraph 156 of the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) which states playing fields and sports pitches should not be redeveloped except where: 1. the proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field, 2. the proposed development involves a minor part of the playing field which would not affect its use and potential for sport and training, 3. the playing field which would be lost would be replaced by a new playing field of comparable or greater benefit for sport and in a location which is convenient for its users, or by the upgrading of an existing playing field to provide a better quality facility either within the same site or at another location which is convenient for its users and which maintains or improves the overall playing capacity in the area, or 4. a playing field strategy prepared in consultation with sportscotland has demonstrated that there is a clear excess of sports pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand in the area, and that the site could be developed without detriment to the overall quality of provision. The proposed development would result in the loss of the existing bowling greens. However, the bowling greens would be replaced by an active recreational use which better reflects the changing nature of the demand for sports facilities in the City. As the site has lain empty for around 4 years, it is considered that bringing the site back into use is of great benefit to Aberdeen as a whole. In a report to the Council in April 2008, officers recommended closure of the bowling greens at Queen’s Links and that alternative uses be sought for the land. This recommendation came about after analysis showed that the premises were under-used.

Local Plan policy 48 (Sports Facilities) states sport and recreational facilities will be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that; 1. They are not detrimental to the natural or built environment or to residential amenity; 2. Locations are accessible to the catchment population, giving priority to walking, cycling and public transport; 3. Public access arrangements can be maintained, enhanced or,
where appropriate, provided in a convenient location in the vicinity of the development; 4. The impact of floodlighting and appearance of any associated structures would not adversely affect the amenity of nearby residential properties or the character of the area; and 5. They meet the objectives of Aberdeen’s Playing Pitch Strategy. Existing sport and recreation facilities shall be retained unless they are being replaced by an improved facility. It is considered that there is no conflict with the above policy. The proposal would not be detrimental to the natural or built environment due to what currently exists on this and adjacent site. The site would still be readily accessible by bus, car, foot and bicycle with bike storage being included to encourage sustainable travel to the site. The floodlights are shown indicatively as 15m high and angled to avoid unnecessary glare. It is considered there would be little, if any, negative impact on nearby residential properties from the floodlights. As stated above, the bowling greens were under-used prior to closing – hence why the Council sought to sell the site. What is proposed is a recreational activity that would be of more benefit than a site lying vacant and unkempt.

Conclusion
It is considered that there would be minimal visual impact caused by the development and indeed, because of the large Transition Extreme Sports building, the outdoor rope area and dirt bike track would not be as prominent. Notwithstanding the above, it is considered necessary to ensure that an element of landscaping is included in the site to make up for the removal of the existing hedging which acts as a green barrier to the site. The site has not been used for almost 4 years, and is poorly maintained, and it is considered that bringing the site back into use would be better than the site lying vacant longer than is necessary. Sport Scotland have not objected to the application on the basis that there are sufficient bowling facilities elsewhere in the city and that the proposed uses would encourage physical activity.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

It is considered that there would be minimal visual impact caused by the development and indeed, because of the large Transition Extreme Sports building, the outdoor rope area and dirt bike track would not be as prominent. The site has been vacant for almost 4 years, and is poorly maintained, and it is considered that bringing the site back into use would be better than the site lying vacant for a longer period of time. The use of the site for physical activity purposes would have very little impact on the designation of the land as Urban Green Space given the most recent use was for similar. In terms of Local and National policy, there is considered to be no conflict.

it is recommended that approval is granted with the following condition(s):

(1) that the development hereby approved shall not be occupied unless the car parking areas hereby granted planning permission have been constructed, drained, laid-out and demarcated in accordance with drawing No. A4552/PL-003B of the plans hereby approved or such other drawing as may subsequently be submitted and approved in writing by the planning authority. Such areas shall
not thereafter be used for any other purpose other than the purpose of the
parking of cars ancillary to the development and use thereby granted approval -
in the interests of public safety and the free flow of traffic.

(2) that the development hereby granted planning permission shall not be
occupied unless all drainage works detailed on Plan No 103 or such other plan
as may subsequently be approved in writing by the planning authority for the
purpose have been installed in complete accordance with the said plan - in order
to safeguard water qualities in adjacent watercourses and to ensure that the
proposed development can be adequately drained.

(3) that no development pursuant to the planning permission hereby approved
shall be carried out unless there has been submitted to and approved in writing
for the purpose by the planning authority a further detailed scheme of
landscaping for the site, which scheme shall include indications of all existing
trees and landscaped areas on the land, and details of any to be retained,
together with measures for their protection in the course of development, and the
proposed areas of tree/shrub planting including details of numbers, densities,
locations, species, sizes and stage of maturity at planting - in the interests of the
amenity of the area.

(4) that all planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of
landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting season following the
completion of the development and any trees or plants which within a period of 5
years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become
seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with
others of a size and species similar to those originally required to be planted, or
in accordance with such other scheme as may be submitted to and approved in
writing for the purpose by the planning authority - in the interests of the amenity
of the area.

(5) Prior to work commencing on site, detailed plans and drawings of the specific
layout of the proposed dirt bike track shall be submitted for the further written
approval of the Planning Authority. Such plans shall clearly illustrate, in cross-
section form, the existing and proposed ground levels. The dirt bike track shall
not be used unless the details approved in compliance with this condition, or, if
necessary, a further planning application, have been implemented in full - in
order to ensure that the Planning Authority have full information regarding the
levels of the land on site

(6) Prior to work commencing on site, detailed plans and drawings of the specific
layout and height of the outdoor rope adventure area shall be submitted for the
further written approval of the Planning Authority. Such plans shall clearly
illustrate, in cross-section form, the existing and proposed ground levels. The
outdoor rope adventure area shall not be used unless the details approved in
compliance with this condition, or a further planning application, have been
implemented in full - in order to ensure that the Planning Authority have full
information regarding the levels of the land on site

(7) That no development shall take place unless a scheme for external lighting
has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, and
thereafter implemented in full accordance with said scheme - in the interest of
public safety.
(8) that, except as the Planning Authority may otherwise agree in writing, no construction or demolition work shall take place:
(a) outwith the hours of 7.00 am to 7.00 pm Mondays to Fridays;
(b) outwith the hours of 9.00 am to 4.00 pm Saturdays; or
(c) at any time on Sundays,
except (on all days) for works inaudible outwith the application site boundary.
[For the avoidance of doubt, this would generally allow internal finishing work, but not the use of machinery] - in the interests of residential amenity.

(9) That none of the units hereby granted planning permission shall be occupied unless a scheme detailing cycle storage provision has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the planning authority, and thereafter implemented in full accordance with said scheme - in the interests of encouraging more sustainable modes of travel.

(10) that no development pursuant to this planning permission shall take place, nor shall any part of the development hereby approved be occupied, unless there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, a detailed scheme of site boundary enclosures for the entire development hereby granted planning permission. Neither the dirt bike track nor the outdoor adventure rope area hereby granted planning permission shall come into use unless the said scheme has been implemented in its entirety - in order to preserve the amenity of the neighbourhood.

(11) that the dirt bike track and outdoor rope adventure area hereby granted planning permission shall not be used outwith the hours of 10am & 10pm Monday to Saturday inclusive, and 10am & 8pm on Sundays - in the interests of residential amenity of the nearby residential dwellings

Dr Margaret Bochel
Head of Planning and Sustainable Development.