
Snodland Snodland West	569710 162094	12.06.2006	TM/06/00287/FL
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Proposal:	Proposed extension (gym/ boxing club/ social club) to existing sports hall / community centre
Location:	Downsview (Snodland Community Centre) Paddlesworth Road Snodland Kent
Applicant:	Smurfit Kappa Townsend Hook Ltd

1. Description:

- 1.1 This proposal is for two single storey extensions to the existing Snodland Community Centre. The "Phase 1 extension" is to be sited to the east of the existing building towards Cemetery Lane and will provide changing rooms, a boxing club and gym. The "Phase 2 extension" is to be sited to the south of the existing building, towards Paddlesworth Road, and provides a social area, as well as extended space for the Community Centre.
- 1.2 The proposed extensions will be constructed from matching materials, with their roofs pitching back to the main Community Centre building. The sizes of the proposed extensions are 27.4m by 9.65m (Phase 1) and 33.925m by 9.175m (Phase 2). The Phase 1 extension is sited over a grassed area and side service access to the existing building. The Phase 2 extension is sited over an existing grassed area separating the Community Centre from the car park.
- 1.3 The application has been made by Smurfit Kappa Townsend Hook Ltd and Phase 1 is part of their contribution towards replacement playing space provision required under their planning permission for residential development at the Townsend Hook playing fields on the eastern side of the High Street. The Community Centre is managed by the Snodland Community Association, whilst all the surrounding land is owned and managed by Snodland TC. All the appropriate ownership notices have been served.
- 1.4 The application is accompanied by a supporting planning statement and a noise statement, which are available for Members inspection prior to the meeting.

2. The Site:

- 2.1 The application site lies outside the urban confines of Snodland and within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site lies on the northern side of Paddlesworth Road and just to the west of Cemetery Lane. The Snodland Community Centre building lies some distance back from Paddlesworth Road and is separated by a large car park. To the west of the site lies the playing fields of Potyns Field, whilst to the north lies the all weather ball court.
- 2.2 The Community Centre is a large two storey building, with a single storey element (on the western side), which incorporates changing rooms.

2.3 The relevant policies are P2/16, P4/11, P6/12 and P6/22 of the TMBLP 1998 and SS2 and QL1 of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006.

3. Planning History:

3.1 TM/84/55 Approved 29.02.1984
Details of community centre (Phase I and II) with ancillary car parking and access.

3.2 TM/76/1121 Approved 24.03.1977
Change of use from agricultural to recreational use and erection of an access.

4. Consultees:

4.1 TC: Strongly support provision of much needed community facilities that are long overdue.

4.2 DL: In principle, the development of this facility is fully supported and it is understood that this proposed design meets the aspirations of Snodland Town Council. It is considered essential that Snodland TC is fully consulted on the details of this application to ensure that it complies with their requirements in terms of design, construction and the provision of appropriate additional facilities. It is important that the building is capable of operating flexibly, so that it can meet the needs of a range of different community users.

4.3 DHH: The environmental health issue raised by this application is noise. The proposed extension to the community centre includes a social club to the south of the existing building with the entrance and windows facing nearby houses.

4.3.1 In my opinion, to safeguard the aural amenity of nearby residents, noise from music played within the social club should be no more than barely audible outside the closest houses. (Provided that this criterion is met, noise attributable to the playing of amplified music within the premises should not be audible within houses with windows open in a manner typical for ventilation).

4.3.2 It is proposed to use a profile steel roof cladding. This form of construction has a relatively poor low frequency noise attenuation performance. Because of this, the restricted spatial separation between the social club and the nearest dwellings, and the high volume at which dance music is typically played I think it is unlikely that the "normal" practice of providing acoustic treatment to windows alone will be sufficient to control music noise emissions. I consider that a much more comprehensive noise control scheme which includes the "treatment" of the roof and the provision of a music noise limiting device will be required. I anticipate that acoustically screened mechanical ventilation will also be required to achieve an acceptable environment within the club, particularly during the warm summer months, because the opening of windows and doors during functions would inevitably result in unacceptable noise emissions.

4.3.3 An alternative to the acoustic treatment of the building would be a restriction on the volume at which music is played so that it is at no time louder than conversation masking background music.

4.3.4 There is also a risk that the departure of patrons, some in high spirits, in the early hours of the morning has the potential to give rise to unacceptable noise disturbance. To what extent this is the case depends to a significant degree on the quality of management control exercised by the proprietors of the proposed club.

4.3.5 The applicant's agent has submitted additional information relating to the anticipated noise impact of the existing building and proposed new development. The information addresses:-

- the current operation of the existing building
- the acoustic design and management of the "phase 1" boxing club and gym
- outlines the acoustic design and management of the "phase 2" social club and suggests that this aspect be subject to the imposition of a suitably worded condition on any approval that might be granted.

4.3.6 So far as the "Phase 1" boxing club and gym are concerned I consider the submitted details to be satisfactory. With regard to the "Phase 2" Social Club I do not wish to object to this aspect of the application provided that any consent is subject to a condition to require the submission, approval and implementation and continuing maintenance of a scheme of acoustic treatment of this part of the building that is sufficient to ensure that music played within the social club is at no time more than barely audible outside the closest houses.

4.3.7 I also recommend that any permission is subject to a restriction on hours of operation that reflects the current constraints relating to the existing community centre.

4.4 KCC (Highways): Part of the proposals will encompass an area of existing parking space to the eastern side of the building.

4.4.1 Theoretically a social club / bar facility could attract a parking requirement of up to 1 parking space per 4 sq m of floor space: with the new gym and boxing area attracting further parking based on the floor area of up to 80 car parking spaces.

4.4.2 In this instance, I acknowledge that the facility is mainly used by local residents who may walk or cycle to the site; however, visiting teams etc will require adequate parking.

4.4.3 The vehicle parking plan shows some 80 car parking spaces and details suggest that further parking could be accommodated on grassed areas if required. It is difficult to assess uses that could attract spectator parking, but it is likely that team

transport would be often shared. Therefore, based on the details provided, the parking provision is likely to be acceptable. Therefore, on balance, raise no objections.

4.5 Sport England: The area for the extensions to the community centre will not affect the adjacent playing fields, or land that forms part of the playing fields. Therefore, the development meets the Sport England policy, as the land in question is not capable of forming part of a playing pitch or play area.

4.5.1 Sport England had objected to an earlier version of the proposal as that did not provide separate changing and wc facilities for the disabled. These facilities have now been provided and conform to our Technical Guidance Notes. For this reason, Sport England withdraws its objection to this application.

4.6 Private Reps: 45/0X/0S/3R. Three letters received objecting on the following grounds:

- Noise disturbance;
- Increased traffic movements;
- Loss of daylight;
- Will bring more youths to the site;
- Loss of privacy;
- Detract from the visual amenity of the locality;
- Loss of security and anti-social behaviour;
- Light pollution from additional external lights;
- Parking problems;
- The existing hedge provides a visual barrier, which will potentially be lost;
- No noise mitigation measures proposed;
- Building should be managed better to prevent anti social behaviour.

4.7 A8 Site Notice: No response.

5. Determining Issues:

- 5.1 The main issues to be considered are whether the principle of the proposal is appropriate, whether the proposal will detract from the visual amenity of the locality, whether unacceptable noise and disturbance will arise for nearby residents and whether the proposal will result in hazardous highway conditions.
- 5.2 This development does have background circumstances, which are not solely related to the application site. As Members will note from the application details, the applicant is neither the TC or the Community Association, but Townsend Hook. When permission being granted for residential development (TM/04/02592/FL) on the Townsend Hook football playing pitches off the High Street, a condition was imposed requiring alternative play space to be provided. Following discussions between Townsend Hook, the TC and Snodland Community Association, it was proposed to extend the existing community centre to provide additional changing rooms to serve the existing playing pitches at Potyns Field, as well as providing a replacement boxing club, which is also being removed from the Townsend Hook football pitch site. Townsend Hook will be funding the Phase 1 extension, which is intended to meet their off site playing fields obligations from planning permission TM/04/02592/FL. Moreover the Phase 1 extension will provide changing facilities to support the increased pitch provision ensured for the Holborough Valley development land, which assist in pitch capacity to meet the losses of the Smurfit Kappa pitch.
- 5.3 In addition, the existing TC maintained gym within a pre-fabricated building within the grounds of the Church of the New Jerusalem in the High Street is proposed to be demolished as part of the conversion of the Church (Subject to planning application TM/06/01008/FL). The TC has only previously held a lease on this building and is now seeking a permanent home for the gym.
- 5.4 The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is subject to policies P2/16 of the TMBLP 1998 and SS2 of the KMSP 2006. They seek to prevent 'inappropriate development in the MGB. Under the Green Belt guidance in PPG2, new buildings are permitted, where they relate to essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation uses. Therefore, the changing rooms element of the development meets the requirements of PPG2, as it relates to additional changing facilities to serve the football pitches, it is not "inappropriate". In terms of the other elements of the uses within the proposed extension, they do not fall within the definition of outdoor sport or recreational uses, and as such the application has been advertised as a departure from the TMBLP 1998. Nevertheless, I consider the extension of an existing community/social facility entirely logical, especially bearing in mind that both Holborough Valley and Woodlands Farm developments will increase the need for community facilities. The social club extension is entirely consistent with these requirements and I consider that Very Special Circumstances are demonstrated satisfactorily.

- 5.5 The applicant has submitted a case to demonstrate very special circumstances, on the basis that the development relates to sports facilities and that the proposals would unify local sports facilities. Strong support for the development has been received from the TC, who perceive that it will provide “*much needed community facilities that are long overdue*”. The DL also fully supports this development and it should be noted that Sport England raises no objection to the proposal.
- 5.6 The principle of recreational and community facilities in a rural area is supported by policies P6/12 & P6/22 of the TMBLP 1998 subject to them meeting detailed criteria, but still subject to Green Belt policies. However, there is a clear need to ensure that existing sport facilities within Snodland are not lost. The inclusion of a gym and boxing club retains these sports facilities within the local community. The proposed additional space for the community centre and the social area will be ancillary activities for the Community Centre and will also serve the proposed sporting facilities.
- 5.7 The provision of changing rooms is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt. The Phase 2 extension including the extra space and social area is to service the Community Centre, which I consider could be justified on the basis of community benefit. In terms of the boxing club and gym, I consider that retention of these facilities within the town is an important consideration and consider it entirely sensible to group these facilities with the existing sports provision at the community centre, rather than proposing a separate building. Therefore, I consider that very special circumstances exist to permit this development within the Green Belt, given the unifying nature and wider community benefit.
- 5.8 The proposed extensions are to be constructed in matching materials to the existing building and in a single storey form. Pitched roofs are proposed, sloping towards the main two storey building. Objections have been received that the proposed extensions will detract from the visual amenity of the locality contrary to policy P4/11 of the TMBLP, principally on the basis that the existing building is of low quality and already harms the rural appearance of the locality. However, this is an existing building, which was found to be visually acceptable in this rural location in 1985. Whilst higher quality materials could be used on the proposed extensions, they would be unlikely to be in keeping with this typical community building. The proposed materials and design are sympathetic and will not detract from the visual amenity and would not be contrary to policy P4/11 of the TMBLP 1998.
- 5.9 The proposal will result in extensive trimming back of the existing hedgerow facing onto Cemetery Lane. This hedgerow is an important visual screen and barrier from Cemetery Lane. Whilst the applicant has shown the existing hedge to be retained, given the extent of the trimming back proposed, it may require some sections of the hedgerow to be replaced and such circumstances can be accommodated through a landscaping condition.

- 5.10 In highway terms, the proposal will not result in the loss of any parking spaces, but will remove a side access for service vehicles. The proposed development will increase the parking requirements for the site, but the KCC Highways is satisfied that the existing 80 parking spaces are capable of accommodating the additional demands. Whilst the number of traffic movements will undoubtedly increase as a result of this development, the KCC Highways does not consider they will increase to levels that would constitute a highway hazard.
- 5.11 I note local residents' concerns that the proposal will result the loss of light and privacy to their properties, however the distance between the proposed extension and nearest residential property in Cemetery Lane is 30m. Given this separation distance, the proposal will not result in the loss of any light or privacy to the residential properties in Cemetery Lane.
- 5.12 Local residents have raised strong concerns as a result of the existing noise disturbance and anti social behaviour of some patrons leaving the premises in the evenings. In particular, residents do not consider that the proposal should be approved until better management of the site takes place, such as locking the gates of the car park after the community centre closes, as the car park is being used out of hours for allegedly reckless driving activities. The existing building is permitted to remain open until midnight on every night and can also stay open until 1am on five occasions per year. None of the letters of objection refers to the existing building operating outside these hours. The management of the car park and any anti social use are matters for the Town Council, as it is their land, and I propose to attach an informative, suggesting that the car park gate is closed after the evening uses cease.
- 5.13 The DHH does not envisage that the noise associated with the use of the gym, changing rooms or boxing club within the Phase 1 extension will unduly harm the residential amenity of the nearby residents in Cemetery Lane. However, the DHH does consider that noise outbreak from the social area of the Phase 2 extension and the associated noise disturbance of caused by some persons leaving the club in high spirits may harm the residential amenities of nearby dwellings. In terms of noise outbreak from the social area, the DHH considers noise mitigation measures should be incorporated into the design of the building, such as mechanically ventilated windows and noise insulation within the roof. Such mitigation measures can be controlled by condition and would reduce the impact of the noise from the social area to a satisfactory level.
- 5.14 In terms of disturbance of arising from patrons leaving the building, the DHH considers it appropriate to restrict the hours of use of the social area in the interests of the aural amenity of the nearby dwellings. The existing building is permitted to remain open until midnight on every night and can also stay open until 1am on five occasions per year. None of the letters of objection refers to the existing building operating outside these hours. In this instance, I consider it appropriate to impose the same hours of use as the existing community centre,

including the five occasions when the building can be used until 1am, subject to the operators being required to keep a logbook to record when such events occur.

5.15 I note local residents concerns over external lighting. The control of lighting and its impact is covered by condition.

5.16 In light of the above considerations and on balance, I consider that there are very special circumstances to justify this development in the Green Belt, therefore, I support this proposal.

6. Recommendation:

6.1 **Grant Planning Permission** as detailed by letters dated the 8 June 2006, 27 January 2006, 3 February 2006, 24 April 2006 and plans 1834-11, 1834-03C, 1834-01, 1834-02, 1834-03B, 1834-04B and by Planning Statement dated April 2006 subject to the following conditions:

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping and boundary treatment. All planting, seeding and turfing comprised in the approved scheme of landscaping shall be implemented during the first planting season following occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the earlier. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being seriously damaged or diseased within 10 years of planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with trees or shrubs of similar size and species, unless the Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and locality.

3 The existing hedgerow adjacent to Cemetery Lane shown on the approved plan, other than any specifically shown to be removed, shall not be lopped, topped, felled, uprooted or wilfully destroyed without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority, and any planting removed with or without such consent shall be replaced within 12 months with suitable stock, adequately staked and tied and shall thereafter be maintained for a period of ten years.

Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect the appearance and character of the site and locality.

4 All materials used externally shall match those of the existing building.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not harm the character and appearance of the existing building or visual amenity of the locality.

- 5 The use of the hereby approved extensions shall cease no later than midnight on any day. The extensions may also remain open until 1am on five occasions during a year. A logbook shall be maintained at the Community Centre recording when the extensions remained open after midnight until 1am. This written record shall be made available for inspection by the Local Planning Authority and subject to inclusions from the Council, where it considers that the extensions were used after midnight.

Reason: In the interests of the aural amenity of nearby dwellings.

- 6 No external lighting shall be installed on the hereby approved extensions without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the locality.

- 7 The Phase 2 extension shall not be occupied or used until a mitigation scheme to deal with noise outbreak from the social area has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to occupation and shall be retained thereafter. The mitigation measures shall include a maintenance scheme for the mitigation measures. The mitigation scheme shall be designed to ensure that when music is played within the social area, it is at no time more than barely audible outside the closest homes in Cemetery Lane.

Reason: In the interests of the aural amenity of the nearby dwellings.

Informative:

- 1 The Town Council is requested to ensure that the gate to the Community Centre car park is closed every night after the events carried out at the Community Centre have ceased.

Contact: Aaron Hill