

Report to District Development Control Committee

Date of meeting: 30 January 2013



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Planning application EPF/0817/12 for replacement club house and associated development and outline application for 8 semi detached houses development, at Upper Clapton Football Club, Upland Road, Thornwood, Epping Essex, CM16 6NL

**Officer contact for further information: Mrs Jill Shingler Ext 4106
Committee Secretary: S Hill Ext 4249**

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee consider the recommendation of Area Planning Sub Committee East to Grant Consent for the development subject to:

- (i) a legal agreement to secure that all proceeds from the sale of the land for residential purposes is held by the Council and utilised only for the provision of the facilities set out in the application; and**
- (ii) to the planning conditions set out in Appendix 2 to this report.**

Report Detail

1. (Director of Planning and Economic Development) The Planning application was reported to Area Plans Sub-Committee East with an officer recommendation to refuse planning permission. The original report to committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and although the redevelopment of the Rugby Club facilities is considered acceptable, the eight semi detached residential units proposed are clearly inappropriate development and in an unsustainable location. In addition the indicative layout shown resulted in inadequate private amenity space for the proposed dwellings. Officers on balance considered that the harm to the Green Belt from the enabling development was not outweighed by the circumstances argued by the applicant.

2. The main issue for the sub- committee was that the Rugby Club is a long established and well supported local facility an asset to the community in need of upgrading to modern standards. The Committee therefore considered that the provision of housing to provide cross funding to enable the upgrade of these facilities could amount to very special circumstances, but were concerned that the applicants had not shown that the 8 houses proposed was the minimum level of development necessary to enable the proposed upgrading of the facilities, and were concerned that inadequate amenity space would be provided for the dwellings.

3. At Committee the presenting planning officer suggested, with the agreement of the applicant, that reference to "8" semi detached properties could be removed from the description of development, so that Members could simply consider whether "enabling residential development" would be acceptable, which would allow the applicant to provide more information when reported to the District Development

Committee and would not cause undue delay. The applicant is reliant on funding not only from the enabling development but also from grants from other sources including Sport England and further delay would have put the grant funding in jeopardy.

4. The sub Committee therefore agreed to refer the application with its revised description (removing reference to a specific number of houses) to this committee with a recommendation for approval, with a request that additional information regarding the viability of the scheme and a justification for a specific number of dwellings, be provided to this committee.

5. Since that meeting the applicants have provided additional financial information which shows to the satisfaction of officers that that in order to achieve the income required to enable the club redevelopment to take place, they will indeed need to be able to sell the land with unencumbered Outline consent for 8, 3 bed semi detached dwellings. Alternative scenarios were also investigated; including development of a mix of terraced and detached houses and for fewer houses, but none resulted in the required land value.

6. In addition the applicants have submitted a new indicative layout plan, elevations and floor plans for the residential element of the scheme. These revised details omit the rear access road originally proposed to serve the dwellings and allows access from the front. The dwellings are also reduced in width to allow more space between them and rooms at 2nd floor level have been removed so that they are true two story properties with just 3 bedrooms. The indicative plans show that 8, three bedroom semi-detached houses can be satisfactorily located within the proposed residential area, which would meet current amenity space and parking standards and would fit in with the general character of Upland Road. This satisfactorily overcomes the suggested 3rd reason for refusal in the original officers' report.

7. This remains a balanced decision, whilst officers accept that the 3rd reason for refusal has now been overcome, the site is still considered to be an unsustainable location for residential development and it is still officers view that the development of land for housing, in order to enable the redevelopment of the sports facility, is not in itself "Very Special" as it could be argued elsewhere.

Conclusion

8. Should the Committee be persuaded by the Area Committee recommendation to grant planning permission, it is recommended that the description of development reverts back to that of the original application (including reference to 8 semi detached houses) to allow certainty to any prospective purchasers, (and hence enable the required land value to be achieved) and to prevent pressure for more dense development out of character with the area. It is also recommended that permission is subject to the applicant first entering into a legal agreement, to ensure that all proceeds from the sale of the land for residential purposes is held by the Council and utilised only for the provision of the facilities set out in the application. In addition, officers suggest that the conditions set out in appendix 2 should be attached.