



PLANNING SERVICES

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)

**HEARING
STATEMENT OF CASE:**

**APPENDIX 6:
LEISURE AND COMMUNITY NEED
PREPARED BY NORTOFT**



APPEAL SITE

Mansfield Bowling Club, Croftdown Road, London, NW5 1EP

APPELLANT

Generator Group LLP

SUBJECT OF APPEAL

Appeal against refusal of planning permission (ref: 2015/1444/P) on 1st of February 2016 for:

“Creation of a new publicly accessible open space; enhanced tennis facilities including the reconfiguration and extension of the courts to provide an additional court and increased playing area to accord with LTA requirements; the provision of a new ancillary pavilion (Class D2) to replace existing ancillary buildings and structures providing community and leisure space; a new community garden; and the demolition and replacement of the existing bowling club building with a new part three storey, part 2 storey building providing 21 residential dwellings (Class C3) with associated access, parking and landscaping.”

COUNCIL REFERENCE: 2015/1444/P

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: APP/X5210/W/16/3153454

HEARING STATEMENT OF CASE:

APPENDIX ON LEISURE AND COMMUNITY NEED PREPARED BY NORTOFT



Introduction

These notes have been prepared by David O'Neil BSc (Hons), PGCFHEd, MIMSPA, DipUP, MRTPI. David is the Managing Director of Nortoft Planning.

Nortoft Planning undertakes sports facilities, playing pitch and open space strategies, as well as sports and leisure feasibility studies from local to national level facilities. Nortoft provides planning policy development, wider strategic and economic planning advice to local authorities, NGBs and sports clubs. Nortoft also provides planning and economic development advice to various commercial clients on large scale retail, office, industrial, logistics and residential developments.

David has been involved in the production and assessment of over 100 sports and leisure strategies over a 25 year period. He is currently involved with eight live sports and leisure strategies, and also provides in-house planning application, masterplanning, s106/CIL and planning appeal advice to two councils on all of their housing applications, with respect to sport, leisure and community needs.

David has undertaken many sports and leisure facility feasibility studies and business plans for local authority sports centres, countryside visitor centres, small community halls and national sports centres.

David has been a Regional Planning Adviser to Sport England, an interim Chairman of a National Governing Body of Sport, and a member of Government leisure, environmental and transport working groups. David regularly produces proofs of evidence and acts as an expert witness in planning appeals and EIPs. David is also a parish councillor and currently steering a Neighbourhood Plan through the planning process.

Context

The planning application included a 'Sports and Leisure Report' by SLC consultants (January 2015) supporting the application, and an independent review of that report by KKP consultants for the Council (February 2015). In terms of evidencing sports, leisure and community need, these two reports provided the main technical evidence base. In the committee report and its appendices the results of the community consultation are reported. The Minutes of the Planning Committee also include further relevant discussion.

Nortoft has considered both these reports and other materials, and found the needs assessment of the SLC report and the subsequent assessment of that report by KKP not to be robust. There is clearly a demand without a sufficient supply for a range of alternative indoor sports (see below). This analysis has been considered in the light of national planning policy, London Borough of Camden's policies and the Appellant's Hearing Statement. The policy implications have been fed into the main body of this Hearing Statement.

The onus of this assessment is to make the case that there are alternative uses of the development site for sport, leisure and community activity that would meet an assessed and current need; these should have been robustly assessed but have not. Some further assessment and research has also clarified that a mix of alternative uses has a reasonable chance of being viable and this has also been tested as far as possible with commercial operators. Detailed site cost analyses, facility programming and business planning work has not been undertaken and would be needed to confirm this assessment.

However, in my experience, having considered the site and the local need, I think that a facility mix using the current (renovated) indoor sports hall and associated buildings for a multi-sports use, together with outside activity space and an improved and extended tennis facility, can reasonably be expected to provide a much needed sports, leisure and community venue. Such a venue might possibly be run by a community trust or a commercial provider of community leisure, working with key local clubs and schools.

KKP's commentary upon SLC alternative leisure use analysis			Nortoff's Comments
Alternative Leisure Use	Suitability	KKP/SLC Rationale for lack of suitability	
Athletics Track	No	Spatial requirements	<p>SLC/KKP only considered a 400m track. They did not consider either 'compact facilities' as approved by British Athletics that would fit on site, nor that there is also a significant clear need for indoor training; the existing building (refurbished) would be able to offer a suitable venue. Highgate Harriers AC is based at Parliament Hill (14 minutes walk away). The club "<i>would be extremely supportive of an indoor athletics facility within the Mansfield Bowls Club, which would provide a much needed facility to provide further community athletics provision, particularly for young athletes aged 7-16. This facility would also help take the club to the next level. The lack of any indoor training facility does hold us back</i>". The club has approximately 170 adult members, 200 being 11-16 year olds and, 110 under 11 year olds, and with an under 11's waiting list of over 100. "<i>The Mansfield Bowls Club building once refurbished would provide the club with much needed extra space taking under 11 and other training off the main track. The building dimensions as it stands would be fine. The opportunities for winter training and conditioning for all ages would be a great help. The club would very seriously look at this opportunity as it meets a clear need</i>".</p> <p>In addition there are 3 other athletics clubs that use Parliament Hill and so might also use an indoor centre at the Mansfield Bowling Club site.</p>
Bowls		No demand	Agree it is unlikely that bowls will return to the site.
BMX track	No	Spatial requirements Noise pollution	SLC/KKP only considered a 300-400m track. Smaller informal youth tracks could fit into the site. With on-site and time management, residential amenity impact could be sufficiently mitigated. There is a deficit of youth play in the Borough (OSSRS).
Cinema	No	Needs High Street/Town Centre locations to attract footfall.	Agree
Cricket Pitch	No	Spatial requirements Site shape and topography	SLC/KKP did not consider indoor cricket nets which would be a potential appropriate use of the current indoor space, along with other indoor uses.
Football Pitch / Five-A-Side Football. Rugby Union pitch	No	Spatial requirements, Light and noise pollution, Lack of car parking	Football participation is high in the Borough (at 9% the highest in the Residents Survey). Camden has a very significant deficit in pitches, with only has 5 football pitches, which is only 5% of the England average number of pitches per person (OSSRS). Indoor football (including Futsal) would fit within the current space, and would likely have a very high level of use. The options for mini/junior grass football or rugby pitches on the site have not been considered. There is a very significant deficit in such provision. Whilst it is the indoor provision that is most likely to be viable and deliverable as part of a multi-sport centre, the lack of consideration of mini pitches is another assessment weakness.

Health and Fitness	Possible	N/a	Sport England Active People Survey and Market Segmentation (SLC/KKP reports) identify that health and fitness is an extremely popular activity. Most of the LBC facilities, including those close to the site (e.g. Kentish Town Leisure Centre being 1.1 miles away) are operating at capacity and are oversubscribed. Gym, spin classes, dance and studio fitness are all popular. The demand for all these is increasing (ISLFA 2015). With such a high demand, the current site could offer a suitable location. SLC previously proposed such a use (to support the bowls viability). Given the updated information in the ISLFA (2015) this is not an option that should be dismissed, and recent discussion with GLL the local leisure operator, suggest it could be viable at this site (see sports hall comments below). SLC were considering a 60-70 station gym in the original application but now for some reason consider there is sufficient existing provision to cater for latent demand, and also a facility would not be viable without enabling development. This does not align with the market knowledge of oversubscription and lack of capacity in the area (ISLFA 2015) nor with GLL's commercial feel for the site (see below) or GoMammoth's assessment (a national provider active locally – see below). An on-site gym and studio as part of a wider offer may be expected to be viable and cross-fund some other activities.
Korfball		Not considered	The Highbury Korfball Club (11/05/15) state <i>"It is preposterous for the developers to conclude that there would be no groups wanting to use such a facility. We have been looking for a venue for years, so would definitely be interested in a good sports hall facility in Dartmouth Park"</i> .
Martial Arts		Not considered	Not assessed, but the market segmentation suggests there may be a market.
Multi-use games area (MUGA) and skate park	No	Light and noise pollution	With on-site and time management, residential amenity impact (including floodlighting and noise) could be sufficiently mitigated, as it is elsewhere in the Borough. Would be able to provide a facility to meet some of the known deficit in mini football and general youth play.
Music venue	No	Non-commercial – No footfall, Noise pollution, Lack of car parking	Agree.
Children's soft play	Possible	N/A; Limited visibility of the site would not support a viable operation; car parking is limited.	SLC agree (5.2.12) that the site lies in an area of children play deficiency with some 800sqm required (this equates to 2 LEAPS). There is also a market for commercial led (but accessible) soft play. This is evidenced by the site visit by Gambado (soft play) who have identified a shortfall in soft play facilities in the area.
School use	Not considered by SLC/KKP		La Sainte Union (adjacent) has expressed an interest in using the facility , including potential capital investment. Brookfield Primary (0.3 miles) also has expressed an interest in using the facilities. This evidence in to be found in the consultation responses (Amy Silverstone). School use often supports daytime off peak slots thus helping viability.
Swimming Pool	Possible	N/a	Agree unlikely
Table Tennis	Possible	N/a	This could operate as part of a multi-sport shared use.

Tennis		Retain and enhance	Agree this is a suitable use and in line with assessed need for more tennis facilities in the Borough. Three courts with a surface to be agreed with the LTA and the club, and also with floodlighting dependent upon planning restrictions. This does not however mitigate the need for indoor sports hall space.
Theatres	No	High Street/Town Centre locations are better.	Agree
Trampolining Centre	Not considered		<p>Jump Evolution see the site as viable for capital investment and operation. Andrew Lester, Director stated (23/08/16): <i>"As a trampoline operator, I can confirm that subject to contract and the building being presented to us in an acceptable condition including suitable upgrades, head height, modernisation to current standards etc, we (Jump Evolution Ltd), would be interested in taking on a lease for a trampoline park use. We would also, be interested in acquiring the freehold, should it become available and be at an agreeable price, and in this scenario, we would be responsible for the changes and upgrades needed to bring the building up to a workable spec"</i>.</p> <p>Robin Johnson, Property Director of Jump Extreme Limited state (Aug 2016) <i>"We would be very keen to explore the possibility of developing a facility at the subject property, and ... for the avoidance of any doubt, I would reiterate that our interest is very keen to procure/develop a facility in this location and we are in a position to progress matters expeditiously as and when required"</i>.</p> <p>Vernon West, Executive Chairman of "Gojumpin": <i>"From our perspective I can confirm that there is growing demand for trampoline parks and the bowling club site would be suitable and viable, with no competition closer than Acton or Wandsworth"</i> (Aug 2016).</p>
Other community and commercial uses	Not considered		<p>The provision of community uses are also important in policy terms. There is registered interest in the provision of a lone worker workhub/Nursery as part of a multi-use centre (Third Door Ltd 30/04/15).</p> <p>Kajima Partnership have expressed an interest in the site management and would predict an annual income in excess of £60,000 per annum for weekend and evening hall hire, to which could be added school rental income from La Sainte Union and other schools.</p> <p>School Lettings Solutions (08/05/15) estimate that £60,000 upwards for a good quality a sports hall in the MBC location would be a reasonable estimate.</p> <p>There are a growing number of other new trends in sports such as Dodgeball, Group Fitness, Boxercise etc. that are growing rapidly and suffer from a lack of indoor sports hall space. These would fit in well with a multi-sports offer.</p> <p>Go Mammoth, Dominic Davis, Venue Development Manager (22/08/16) states: <i>"Go Mammoth is the ultimate affordable club for busy and active adults looking to maximise their spare time through playing sport, keeping fit and socialising with friends. We would</i></p>

			<p><i>be interested to look further at the site with its current building and opportunities for further outdoor sports facilities. It seems to provide the right sort of venue for a range of sports we offer (from dodgeball to multi-sports and from multi-fitness to corporate events and much more). With the vast swathes of residential developments occurring across London these are the sorts of sites we need to protect! The site's size and location seems to offer a good potential for a viable operation".</i></p>
Sports hall / multi-use indoor	Dismissed	Fiscal viability and sustainability	<p>SLC (6.14.3) agrees there is a demand. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model identifies a high deficit in Camden. All bar one of the sports halls in Camden are considered not to be open for the full amount of the peak period. The LBC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2014) and the KKP Indoor Sports and Leisure Facilities Assessment (2015) (ISLFA) both clearly identify a current major deficit in indoor sports hall space. ISLFA identifies that this will rise to a very significant deficit of 23 courts (about 6 x 4-court halls) by 2031. Only one 4-court hall is currently identified (Infrastructure Delivery Study 2015) for delivery across the whole Plan period to 2031. Whilst there is a current borough wide deficit in multi-use sports halls across the borough there is not one in Hampstead, Highgate or Gospel Oak, however sports hall are assessed as having a 1 mile catchment or 20 minute walk time catchment and this will take the catchment into other wards. More importantly strategic facilities such as gymnastics, fencing, athletics and potentially boxing, amongst others will have a wider catchment. The current hall shape, size and location is suitable for a variety of specific uses (gymnastics, fencing, indoor athletics, health and fitness/studio, futsal and soft play amongst others).</p> <p>SLC/KKP dismiss any need as not being viable, however leisure operator GLL know the site well and state "<i>GLL analysis is that there is more than enough latent demand for a variety of indoor sports and leisure activities in the area that would be able to be serviced by the current building (once renovated) or a new replacement leisure building on site, and certainly have the potential to be viable. Activities that have a market include dance, other health and fitness studio based activities, a gym, Futsal, other sports and use of the facility by schools. If there was an available market for recreational gymnastics and fencing then these might also be reasonably considered. Caveats would include type of tenure, unknown on-site abnormal costs, the state of the building and cost of renovation/replacement and a deliverable business plan. However in my opinion there is likely to be a reasonable chance of delivering a viable long-term leisure based operation on this site, including appropriate capital and revenue costs"</i> (Aug 2016).</p> <p>Direct discussions with other potential sports users including gymnastics, fencing and athletics clubs suggests confidence in the potential to make the facility at least revenue neutral. Equally there is a market for commercial community leisure providers such as trampolining and soft play.</p> <p>Options for capital funding from Lottery, National</p>

			<p>Governing Bodies of Sport, the London Marathon Trust and other funding have not been considered by SLC/KKP. The LTA also suggest capital and some revenue may be available for the tennis elements. The cost of refurbishment of the current building have not been properly considered which may well be a more viable option compared to a replacement sports hall. The site is accessible to the local catchment and by train, bus, cycling and walking, and has room for about 60 car parking spaces, which compares well with other London sports centres. It is also noted that if uses such as fencing moved away from traditional sports halls such as at Aclan Burghley Sports Hall, this would potentially free up this hall space for badminton, basketball and other sports requiring a traditional hall dimensions. Aclan Burghley sports hall is 0.5 miles (9 minutes walk) from the Mansfield Bowls site.</p>
Replacement cost of the sports Hall			<p>In order to meet Sport England and NPPF's needs in replacing like for like or better, the equivalent indoor sports hall and community space would include suitable land plus up to £2.5m to £3m. This is based on the cost of a 4 court sports hall at £2.2m (Sport England Q1/2016 price) plus £650,000+ for the community/social area (about 460sqm at £1,426/sqm Spons Q1/2016).</p>