



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2024

by Rebecca McAndrew, BA Hons, MSc, PG Dip Urban Design, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/24/3347663

50 Vista Business Centre, Salisbury Road, Hounslow TW4 6JQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Kakar against the decision of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref is P/2023/3511
 - The development proposed is the temporary (3 year) change of use of land from a football pitch to a car park.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. On my visit I observed that the appeal site is being use as a parking area. I have therefore considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are whether the scheme results in the unacceptable loss of a community sports facility and an overprovision of parking.

Reasons

Loss of community sports facility

4. Taken together, London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan (HLP) (2015) Policies GB9 and CI1 and Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') seek to protect existing community facilities, including outdoor sports provision. Paragraph 103 and HLP Policy CI1 both set out a number of criteria for such development.
5. Paragraph 103 of the Framework requires that schemes to build on sports land meet one of the following three criteria;
 - (a) *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
 - (b) *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; or*

- (c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.*
6. I recognise that the football pitch was used in conjunction with a restaurant and wellness centre which were destroyed by fire in 2018 and since that time the pitch has not been used. However, the appellant has not provided an assessment to demonstrate that the playing field is surplus to requirements. In the absence of evidence which shows otherwise, it must be assumed that the appeal scheme conflicts with this criterion A.
 7. Given that the appeal relates to a carpark and no replacement facility is proposed, the scheme also fails to meet the requirements of criteria b and c. In view of this, the appeal scheme does not meet the requirements of Paragraph 103 of the Framework.
 8. HLP Policy CI1 requires development which results in the loss of an existing community use, and is not re-providing the community use elsewhere, to meet the following criteria;
 - i. *The facility has been vacant or significantly underused for a continuous period of 18 months and is not appropriate for any other community uses as demonstrated by the applicant through evidence of sufficient marketing;*
 - ii. *The facility is no longer required by the body that operates it; and*
 - iii. *Robust evidence has shown that the use is no longer required to serve its catchment area.*
 9. I acknowledge that the appeal scheme meets elements of these criteria, in that the playing field is no longer required by the appellant and it has been out of use since 2018. However, there is no evidence before me which demonstrates that the playing field would not be appropriate for any other community uses and that it is no longer required to serve the catchment area. In view of this, the appeal scheme does not meet the requirements of HLP Policy CI1.
 10. In conclusion, in the absence of evidence to confirm otherwise, it must be assumed that the proposal results in the unacceptable loss of a community sports facility. This is contrary to HLP Policies GB9 and CI1 and Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy.

Parking

11. London Plan (2021) (LP) Policy T6.2 sets out maximum parking standards for offices in this location, advising it to be 1 space per 600 sqm GIA. HLP Policy EC2 requires development to provide a maximum number of car parking spaces, in line with the standards in the LP.
12. The Vista Centre is a multistorey office building which, prior to the formation of the appeal carpark, already included a good level of parking spaces within its grounds. The Council advise that this totals around 160 spaces. On my site visit I observed that the parking area which is the subject of this appeal was not well used. The appellant has not provided any analysis of the provision and demand for parking spaces at the site, which would include a comparison with the maximum parking standards included within the LP.

13. I note the appellant considers that there is a need for the additional 30 parking spaces as public transport provision in the area is poor, with the nearest bus or train station being around 30 minutes walk. The appellant considers that a temporary consent for 3 years would allow time for improvements in public transport. However, no information has been provided about any planned developments in this respect.
14. Taking all the above into account, there is no information before me which clearly demonstrates the need for the additional parking for a temporary period. In the absence of evidence to confirm otherwise, it must be assumed that the appeal scheme gives rise to an overprovision of parking spaces at the site. This is contrary to HLP Policy EC2 and Policy T6.2 of the LP.

Other Matters

15. I note that the appellant requests a temporary consent as plans to rebuild a community centre within the next 3 years are being prepared. They advise that the football pitch would be reinstated as part of that scheme. However, I have minimal information in relation to this proposal before me. There is no certainty that such a scheme will come forward. I therefore attach limited weight to this matter in considering the appeal.
16. I acknowledge that a carparking management plan has been submitted in support of the application. This outlines the operational management of the carpark for three years then the steps for converting the site back to a pitch. Whilst I have attached moderate weight to this matter, this does not provide sufficient justification for the appeal scheme or outweigh my conclusion on the main issues.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Rebecca McAndrew

INSPECTOR