

PLANNING REF : 242598
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 4 Teal Grove
: Shinfield
: RG2 9AZ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Tom Fenwicke-Clennell
DATE SUBMITTED : 24/11/2024

COMMENTS:

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing to formally object to the planning application (Application number 242598) at Millworth Lane, Shinfield for the proposed modification of ground usage. Whilst I understand the need for further leisure facilities within the parish I do not believe or agree that this is the best solution or location. I object to the current plan on the following grounds:

1. Loss of Football Pitches: The proposed development will result in the loss of two football pitches, one 9 a-side pitch and one 11 a-side pitch, both currently maintained by Shinfield Rangers and are acknowledged as two of the best in the area, both by the opposition they play and the leagues they play in. These pitches are vital for the club. There is a current shortage of full-sized football pitches within the area and removing one more makes no sense. Next season

Shinfield Rangers will have 12 teams playing 11v11 football and the Parish have not given any replacement for them to play and train on. The new facilities and pitches at High Copse have not been allocated to Shinfield Rangers. As I understand it there are multiple interested football clubs and Shinfield Rangers could be left without a home. We could be left in the situation that clubs from outside our area will be travelling into our parish each weekend, increasing traffic and resulting in less playing facilities for the children within our community. In Wokingham Borough Council's own Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), they recognise that there is already a shortage of full-sized playing pitches in our area and that they propose 2 x 3G pitches + 4 Full sized adult grass pitches at the proposed Hall Farm Development (still some years away if approved). Given the above, getting rid of Millworth Lane does not make any sense.

2. Detrimental effect on Girls and Women's ability to participate in football: Shinfield Rangers have grown their girls' section massively over the past few years so that girls make up 50% of the overall club membership. The PPS highlights "participation levels (in football) remain lower for women and girls both within Wokingham Borough and nationally. The reasons for this inequality are complex but ensuring our outdoor sports facilities have adequate facilities for women and girls is an essential part of addressing this issue. Given that

Shinfield Rangers currently have U12 Girls, two U13 Girls teams, U15 Girls and U16 Girls all playing their games at Millworth, partly because of the proximity of the pavilion facilities. Removing these pitches and relying on the already over-subscribed Ryeish Green where there is no close proximity to facilities, these plans run the risk of turning more girls away from football.

3. Lack of Consultation: Throughout the process of building these plans there has been a lack of consultation with Shinfield Rangers.

The consultation meeting was held on Saturday 28th January 2024. Given that the Shinfield Rangers would be out fulfilling league fixtures on this date points to a lack of understanding on Shinfield Parish Council's part and a small turnout to the event. Only 46 responses were received on the day plus another 51 in the subsequent weeks after the meeting. These 97 responses have driven the plans as they are today. As mentioned in point 1 there are 12 teams playing 11 a-side football next year, that is a rough total of around 160+ club members affected. As far as I understand the Parish Council have not engaged with the club to work on finding sustainable plans for all parties. I would like to know if Shinfield Parish Council have consulted and worked with Sport England regarding their application? I cannot see any mention to this important step in the documents

submitted here. In Sport England's own words "Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of all or any part of a playing field" unless the development meets at least one of their 5 specific exceptions, having read the below exceptions I do not believe the proposed plans at Millworth Lane meet these exceptions:

3.1. Exception 1: A robust assessment has been made that there is an excess of playing fields in the catchment area.

3.2. Exception 2: The proposed development is for ancillary facilities to support the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches

3.3. Exception 3: The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not: reduce the size of any playing field, reduce the sporting capacity,

3.4. Exception 4: The area of playing field to be lost will be replaced prior to commencement of development by a new area of playing field (of equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity

3.5. Exception 5: The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing fields

4. Over-usage of Millworth Lane: Whilst I agree that development of further leisure facilities with our parish is needed, I do not agree that putting them all in one place is the right way to do it. Would it not make more sense to place the proposed facilities around the parish, at High Copse, Dearden Fields, The Manor, Spencers Wood Rec? This would reduce the over-burden on just one site whilst at the same time retaining the football pitches at Millworth Lane.

In summary I object to the proposed plans as they currently stand and believe they should be rejected. However, I welcome further discussions as to how to protect the provision of our current football facilities whilst finding more suitable space for the provision of new non-football related facilities.