

20 July 2009

FROM:

TO:

Susan Leeson
Planning Services

**ALDINGBOURNE COMMUNITY SPORTS CENTRE, OLIVERS MEADOW,
WESTERGATE – AL/83/08**

The application is made within the boundary of an area of public open space as identified within the Local Plan. This open space is afforded protection from development in accordance with saved Policy AREA5.

There are exceptions to this policy;

(i)

- where the development materially enhances the existing facility or
- satisfies an essential social need that is unable to be provided elsewhere in the locality and where the amount of open space is not significantly reduced.

(ii)

- an equivalent or increased amount of open space can be provided or
- improved recreational facility created elsewhere by the developer and where a substantial portion of the site is retained as public open space.

The above exceptions have not been adequately addressed in the application.

From a public open space perspective the construction of a building on an area of open space does not materially enhance that area of open space. The result is that the area of open space is no longer available for play or for its visual amenity. No detail has been provided on how the proposal might enhance the existing facility.

The area of open space proposed to be developed is approximately 2% of the recreation ground, although not a significant area it does constitute an erosion of that open space.

No proposal for an equivalent area of open space has been provided or an improved facility created elsewhere.

The location of the soakaway will need to be positioned away from the roots zones of neighbouring trees to ensure they are not damaged – this should form part of any condition if approval is given. A landscape condition should be applied to any permission to ensure the development is satisfactorily screened within the open space and from neighbouring residents.

According to the information provided with the application the exceptions to this policy have not been fully addressed. I therefore recommend the application be refused.

Joe Russell-Wells

