

Application No: **14/00627/OUT**
Applicant: **Countryside Properties (UK) Ltd**
Site Location: **Land North of London Road and South of Rawreth Lane and West of Rawreth Industrial Estate, Rayleigh, Essex**
Proposal: **Outline Planning Application for erection of Residential Development with associated Open Space, Landscaping, Parking Servicing, Utilities, Footpath and Cycle Links, Drainage and Infrastructure Works, and Primary School. Provision of Non Residential Floorspace to part of site. Uses including any of the following: Use Class A1(Retail), A39 Food and Drink), A4(Drinking Establishments), C2(Residential Institutions) D1a(Health or Medical Centre) or D1b (Creche, Day Nursery or Day Centre)**

Dear Ms Rodgers

Representation by Rayleigh Town Sports and Social Club

I am a member of the management committee of Rayleigh Town Sports and Social Club (RTSSC) which has sanctioned this representation made on its behalf. It relates to the provision of sports pitches shown as part of the residential development in Countryside Properties (UK) Ltd's planning application, and constitutes an objection on the basis that the provision of pitches outlined in the application is inadequate, and greater provision should be made as an extension of the current RTSSC site.

The club has been consulted by Sport England in relation to the provision of sports pitches as part of this residential development because RTSSC is the main supplier of organised sports facilities in the area and represents most of the clubs that use those facilities. The following sports clubs constitute sections within RTSSC, which is also a social club for local residents with a total membership of over 600 people:

1. **Rayleigh Town Football Club** which has two teams that play in the prestigious Essex Olympian League that requires a ground to be up to a certain standard with regard to changing and spectator facilities.
2. **Wheatleys Football Club** which has one team in the Southend Sunday League and two teams that play on Sundays in the Southend Borough Combination Veterans League.
3. **Rayleigh Boys Football Club**, which is the largest junior club in the south of England with 22 junior teams, including two girl's teams, and, also, under 16, 18 and 21 teams. The club has 4 mini soccer pitches on the RTSSC site used by a dozen teams aged 8 and under.
4. **Weir Sports Football Club** which has one team that plays on Saturdays in the Southend Borough Combination Football League.
5. **Rayleigh Fairview Cricket Club** which has three teams that play on Saturdays in the Mid Essex Cricket League and a 4th team that plays occasional Saturday friendly matches. The club also has a team that plays fixtures on a Sunday. It also has a thriving junior section thanks to the coaching it does in the local schools. It has teams in the South East Essex Junior League in the Under 11, 13 and 15 age groups.

RTSSC shares Sport England's view that the provision of 1.61 hectares of land as two mini soccer pitches would not meet additional local demand for pitches for organised sport arising from the population growth brought about by the 772 houses that are planned to be built north of London Road and on Rawreth Industrial Estate.

The land allocated for sports pitches is shown in Countryside Properties masterplan as adjacent to the north of the current RTSSC site but it is not connected to the site. The club assumes that the intention is that it will be open to public access as there has been no discussion with the club about the 1.61 hectares of playing pitch provision.

The Playing Pitch Strategy Consultation in January 2012 concluded that there was need for extra cricket pitches in Rayleigh. At the moment there is only one cricket pitch on the RTSSC site which means that Rayleigh Fairview CC has to hire a pitch outside of the Rochford District to accommodate its 3rd team's league fixtures and 4th team friendlies. The fact that there is only one pitch prevents the club from expanding the number of junior teams it puts out as it would be too costly to hire an additional ground for fixtures in the junior age groups. The additional membership of the club that will emanate from the new housing will mean that the club will be able to increase its 4th team fixtures and put out additional junior teams and another Sunday team to give people the opportunity to play organised cricket. Consequently RTSSC shares Sport England's view that an additional cricket pitch should be provided at the north end of the RTSSC site in and around the area currently allocated to the mini soccer pitches in Countryside's masterplan.

The Playing Pitch Strategy suggested additional mini soccer pitches but this is now out of date in relation to local requirements as Rayleigh Boys FC have recently introduced teams at older age groups that require full size soccer pitches. Like the cricket club they have to hire some of their pitches outside of Rayleigh to meet the pitch requirements for these teams. As young footballers develop they need senior teams to play for when they pass the mini soccer stage and an additional pitch adjacent to the current RTSSC site would, in the view of Rayleigh Boys FC, be ideal for meeting the additional demand in their club for senior pitches.

Rayleigh Town FC is also looking to utilise the additional demand for soccer facilities by the creation of Saturday teams for Under 21s and Veterans. It is likely that a number of players could come from the new housing development – which is what happened when Little Wheatleys Estate was built over 30 years ago. Weir Sports FC has also expressed an interest in forming another team to meet the increased demand for football teams.

RTSSC therefore shares Sport England's view that a full size soccer pitch should be provided on the outfield of the additional cricket pitch as an extension of the club's facilities. The pitches would need to be provided on a fit for use basis as the club could not afford to develop these pitches. It is hoped that the Developer and the Council would accept Sport England's proposal that the pitches be prepared and designed on the basis of an agronomist report and the guidance in Sport England's paper "Natural Turf for Sport" so that the pitches are of the good standard required for teams that play organised sport at a high level.

RTSSC would also want the Council to arrange for the Developer to provide appropriate ancillary facilities to enable RTSSC to meet increased usage of its site. This would involve extending the car park and providing enlarged dressing room facilities: for example the current cricket pavilion houses only two changing rooms whereas the size of the pavilion would need to be increased to meet the extra changing requirements for four teams. Similar increase in dressing room facilities would be needed for football. Additional football and cricket practice facilities would also be needed and it is hoped that the developer or council would allocate funds to improve the clubhouse as its current exterior is in need of renovation.

As suggested by Sport England, RTSSC would be willing to meet with the developer and council to discuss the nature and dimensions of new enlarged and enhanced facilities, and supports Sport England's proposal that the precise details of the additional facilities should be included in a S106 statement as part of the approval of the planning application. RTSSC believes that providing facilities for local people on the RTSSC site rather than causing them to obtain sports pitches away from their home area would facilitate greater community cohesion which is one of the aims set out in the Sustainable Strategy proposals at page 11 and 12 of the Rochford Local Development Framework Core Strategy Document. If the council proceeds with the provision of the sports pitches on a stand alone basis in accordance with Countryside's current masterplan the club would not be able to allow access to this area through its site as this would not be reconcilable with RTSSC's status as a private members club and would raise security issues.

If its site was extended, RTSSC would wish for a new lease to be granted with a longer tenure than the present one in order to facilitate applications for grants to maintain and improve its site. As the club entirely maintains the site at its own expense and therefore saves the council considerable costs, it is hoped that there would be no increase in the rent on a new lease.

Yours sincerely

David Webster