

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**21st January 2016**

<u>UPRN</u>	<u>APPLICATION NO.</u>	<u>Item No:</u> <u>DATE VALID</u>
	15/P3633	30/09/2015
<b>Address/Site:</b>	Wimbledon College Campion Centre - Playing Field A (Formerly St. Catherine's Playing Fields) Grand Drive Raynes Park SW20 9NA	
<b>Ward:</b>	West Barnes	
<b>Proposal:</b>	Erection of 2m high modular boundary fence and two sections of 6m high ball catch fencing	
<b>Drawing No.'s:</b>	2015-01, 2015-02, technical statement (received 11/11/2015), email with subject heading 'RE: St Catherines Sports Field – Planning Application' (received 11/11/2015) and site location plan.	
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jock Farrow (020 8545 3114)	

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Grant planning permission subject to conditions.**

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## **CHECKLIST INFORMATION**

- Is a screening opinion required: No
- Is an Environmental Statement required: No
- Has an Environmental Statement been submitted: No
- Press notice: Yes (major application)
- Site notice: Yes (major application)
- Design Review Panel consulted: No
- Number of neighbours consulted: 89
- External consultations: 2
- Controlled Parking Zone: No
- Flood zone: Zone 2

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is being brought to the Planning Applications Committee for determination due to the level and nature of objections received.

## **2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 Playing Field A, Wimbledon College Campion Centre (formerly known as 'St. Catherine's Playing Field') is a large playing field (1.9674 ha) on the western side of Grand Drive; the playing field is available for public use. Along the western boundary of the site is the Lower Pyl Brook Wildlife Site and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The site is located within Flood Zone 2. The site is designated Metropolitan Open Land and is part of the Green Corridor extending northwards from, and including, Morden Cemetery. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) on site.

- 2.2 To the north of the site is the St. Catherine's Close housing development, which is separated from the playing field by a low fence. The emergency access route runs down the eastern boundary of the site, between the access route and Grand Drive there is a hedge row approximately 3-4m in height; the hedge row is in need of maintenance. Further to the east (across Grand Drive), there is a row of two storey (with loft level) semi-detached residential dwellings (built along Grand Drive); there is a separation distance between the residential units and the near boundary of the site of approximately 14m. A sports pavilion is located near the southern boundary of the site; beyond the southern boundary is a primary school. To the west of the site are the King's College playing fields, which are separated by a mixture of vegetation and by the Pyl Brook (a designated 'main river').

## **3. CURRENT PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for the erection a 2m high boundary fence down the eastern boundary of the site and two sections of 6m high ball catch fencing within the northern half of the site. The proposal also entails reducing the existing hedge to a height of approximately 1.6m.
- 3.2 The playing field was formerly a part of St. Catherine's Middle School, prior to its closure in 2004; at this time, the playing field was able to provide two pitches alongside one another (parallel to Grand Drive).
- 3.3 Following the school's closure and its replacement with a housing development, a section 106 agreement was implemented which required the developer to provide a sports pavilion with parking provisions and an emergency 'dry' access route from the housing development.
- 3.4 The provisions of a sports pavilion allowed the playing field to be used as a standalone field; however, the construction of the emergency access route reduced the dimensions of the field, allowing only one full sized pitch to be orientated parallel to Grand Drive. It was considered one pitch on a playing field of this size, with the provisions of a sports pavilion, was an underutilisation of the site. Thus, to ensure full utilisation of the playing field, the football club marked the field to provide 3 pitches, which was implemented in the 2015 season. However, to fit 3 pitches within the site, it was necessary

to rotate one pitch 90 degrees, so one end of the pitch backed on to Grand Drive. The rotation of one pitch to the north allowed two additional junior pitches to be positioned side by side within the southern half of the site, in an orientation parallel to Grand Drive.

- 3.5 The applicant has advised that following the re-orientation of the pitch in 2015, sport balls have been prone to straying onto Grand Drive; the applicant has advised this is a hazard for both drivers and for anyone seeking to retrieve the ball. Therefore, the ball catch fencing has been proposed; the applicant has advised that the full 72m (length) of ball catch fencing would be required not only for games, where it would service only one goal, but for practice where multiple goals would be lined up in front of the ball catch fencing.
- 3.6 One section of the proposed 6m high ball catch fencing would be positioned on the eastern side of the site with the other on the western side, the sections of fencing would be positioned immediately behind each goal of the re-orientated pitch; both sections would be 72m in length. The proposed fencing would use a twin wire configuration, with either 6mm vertical wires on 8mm horizontal wires, or 5mm verticals on 6mm horizontals. The proposed fencing would leave a gap between the bottom row of wire and the ground of approximately 50mm. The proposed posts would be metal with black, UV-resistant, polypropylene netting.
- 3.7 This application has been made by the Council's Facilities - Major Projects team in collaboration with the Council's Children Schools and Families department. The initiative has the support of the Council's Leisure & Culture Development team.

#### **4. PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 There is extensive planning history on this site which largely relates to the previous use as a school. The planning history relevant to this application is summarised below:
- 4.2 06/P1933: DEMOLITION OF FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING AND REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE TO INCLUDE 87 FLATS WITH 90 PARKING SPACES AND A NEW SPORTS PAVILION WITH 39 PARKING SPACES – Planning permission granted on appeal decision subject to a legal undertaking relating to affordable housing and future sports field use and improvements.
- 4.3 07/P2709: REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE TO INCLUDE 79 FLATS IN 4 BLOCKS WITH 90 PARKING SPACES AND A NEW SINGLE STOREY SPORTS PAVILION WITH 38 PARKING SPACES – Planning permission granted subject to legal agreement relating to affordable housing and future sports field use and improvements.
- 4.4 10/P3337: ERECTION OF A SINGLE STOREY WATER PUMP ROOM WITH ACCESS STEPS IN CONNECTION WITH DEVELOPMENT OF PART OF THE FORMER ST CATHERINES SCHOOL SITE FOR 87 FLATS UNDER PERMISSION REF 06/P1933 – Planning permission granted.

## 5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Public consultation was undertaken by way of site and press notices and 89 neighbouring residents were notified directly by way of post – 14 representations were received, 13 raised objections to the proposal and 1 was in support.
- 5.2 The summary of objections is as follows:
- Loss of hedgerow. (The hedge would be retained).
  - Parking pressure.
  - Traffic flow.
  - Proposed fence extends across existing car park, thus reducing parking space. (The proposed fence would not extend across any car park).
  - Fence is unnecessary - unaware of balls going on to road.
  - No justification/explanation for proposal/fence heights.
  - Devalue property.
  - Entry gates are not wide enough to allow maintenance. (Access to the site would not change).
  - Excessive scale.
  - Loss of visual amenity.
  - Loss of outlook.
  - Flooding risk.
- 5.3 The summary of support is as follows:
- Every game, balls stray on to the road which has the potential to cause a major accident; kids often chase the ball on to the road.
  - Recently a lorry ran over a ball which caused the driver to stop in the middle of the road.
- 5.4 Raynes Park and West Barnes Resident's Association – Objections as follows:
- Errors on application form – in relation to number of vehicle parking spaces, proximity to watercourse, whether the site is in a flood zone and trees on site. (The application has been assessed in full, comments have been sought from Transport Planning, Flooding Engineers, the Environment Agency and Tree Officers, it is considered these matters have been addressed).
  - Increased parking pressure
  - Loss of hedge row - loss of visual amenity, noise mitigation and habitat. (The hedge would be retained).
  - Loss of visual amenity
  - Require wider entry gates for maintenance
  - Obscures safe access and maintenance access
  - If Planning Permission were to be granted the fence should be located west of the 'safe access route'
- 5.5 Merton Flood Risk Management Engineer – No objection. Advised that a Thames Water sewer runs across the field, any foundations would need to avoid damaging the sewer, consultation with Thames Water was also advised.

- 5.6 Tree Officer – No objection. Advised that temporary fencing should be installed to protect the existing vegetation on site, the contractor would need to be made aware that the area between the temporary fencing and the vegetation is off limits during the works.
- 5.7 Transport Planning – No objection.
- No recorded accidents along the adjacent stretch of Grand Drive for the past 3 years.
  - It is reasonable to assume that any ball straying on to Grand Drive would increase risk of an accident.
  - Reasonable to assume the proposed ball catch would decrease incidence of balls straying on to the road.
- 5.8 Children Schools and Families – Support proposals.
- Following the construction of the 'safe access route' along the eastern boundary of the site, the site was only able to accommodate one pitch if the orientation remained parallel to Grand Drive.
  - Given the site has a sports pavilion and given the site is extensive in area, it is considered that one sports field would be a poor use of the site.
  - To allow full utilisation of the site one pitch would need to be positioned perpendicular to Grand Drive thus allowing two junior pitches to be located side by side and parallel to Grand Drive.
  - To ensure road and pedestrian safety a ball catch fence would be required behind the goal lines of the pitch which is perpendicular to Grand Drive.
- 5.9 Leisure and Culture Development – Support proposals.
- Proposal seeks to increase the number of junior pitches on site.
  - Increasing accessibility to sport fields for children improves health and wellbeing and contributes to their positive growth and engagement in useful activities.
  - Concern regarding road safety and the potential for participants to inadvertently rush out on to the road.
- 5.10 Environment Agency – No objection.
- Given the location of the proposed fencing, it is not considered the proposal would constitute a risk to bio-diversity, or specifically, the Lower Pyl Brook Wild Life site.
  - It is not considered the proposal would obstruct the flow of flood water or lead to the loss of flood storage.

5.11 Thames Water – No objection.

## **6. POLICY CONTEXT**

6.1 NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework (2012):

9. Protecting Green Belt land

10. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 6.2 London Plan Consolidated 2015:  
 2.6 Outer London: vision and strategy  
 2.18 Green infrastructure: the multi-functional network of green and open spaces  
 3.19 Sports facilities  
 6.3 Assessing effects of development on transport capacity  
 7.4 Local character  
 7.5 Public realm  
 7.6 Architecture  
 7.17 Metropolitan open land  
 7.18 Protecting open space and addressing deficiency  
 7.19 Biodiversity and access to nature
- 6.3 Merton Sites and Policies Plan July 2014 policies (SPP):  
 DMC1 Community facilities  
 DMO1 Open space  
 DMO2 Nature conservation, trees, hedges and landscape features  
 DMD2 Design considerations in all development  
 DMF1 Support for flood risk management  
 DMT2 Transport impact of development
- 6.4 Merton Core Strategy 2011 policy (CS):  
 CS11 Infrastructure  
 CS13 Open space, nature conservation, Leisure and culture  
 CS14 Design  
 CS16 Flood risk management  
 CS18 Transport  
 CS20 Parking, servicing and delivery

## **7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### Material Considerations.

- 7.1 The key issues in the assessment of this planning application are:
- Principle of development.
  - Design and impact upon character and appearance of MOL and the wider area.
  - Impact upon surrounding properties.
  - Impact upon flooding.
  - Impact upon transport and road safety.

### Principle of development.

- 7.2 The principle of development should be considered in the context of the site's designation as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). London Plan (2015) policy 3.19 seeks to increase participation in, and increase access to, sport and recreation in London, the policy states that development which increases or enhances sports facilities will be supported.
- 7.3 Policy 7.17 of the London Plan (2015), policy DM O1 of the SPP and policy CS13 of the CS seek to protect open space, especially MOL, from inappropriate development and to maintain its function. Policy 7.17 of the London Plan (2015) advises that appropriate development should be small

scale structures to support outdoor uses. Setting aside the consideration of design and the impact on the character and appearance of the MOL, it is considered that in principle, ball catch fencing is appropriate development on playing fields given it is ancillary to the existing use and as it would facilitate additional usability and functionality of the space.

- 7.4 Policy DM O1 of the SPP provides the key tests for whether development would be acceptable on MOL; the policy states that the proposal should not harm the character appearance or function of the open space and the proposal retains public access.
- 7.5 Given the proposed fencing is located along the border of the site and as it would have a high level of opacity, allowing light and sight to easily travel through the netting, there is not considered to be a loss to the open space. It is acknowledged that the proposed fencing would impact upon the character and appearance of the open space; however, given the open space's function as a playing field, such development is considered to be both typical and appropriate; in context of its function, it is not considered the proposed fencing would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the open space. In addition, the proposal is intended to enhance the usability and functionality of the existing open space, being a sport facility.
- 7.6 Given the above, it is considered the proposal is acceptable in principle; subject to compliance with the relevant London Plan policies, Merton Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Merton Sites and Policies Plan and supplementary planning documents.

Design and impact upon character and appearance of MOL and the wider area.

- 7.7 The NPPF, London Plan policies 7.4 and 7.6, Core Strategy policy CS14 and SPP policy DMD2 require well designed proposals that will respect the appearance, materials, scale, bulk, proportions and character of their surroundings. In addition, specifically in relation to development on open space, policy DM O1 of the SPP requires proposals to be of a high quality design and to not harm the character, appearance or function of open space.
- 7.8 Given the open space's function as a playing field, it is considered the proposed development is both typical and appropriate. The proposed development by its nature would increase the usability and functionality of the playing field, allowing an additional two junior pitches to be located on site. The proposed fencing would have a high level of opacity, allowing light and sight to easily travel through the netting, thereby preserving the character and openness of the MOL.
- 7.9 Objections were received in relation scale and loss of visual amenity; it is considered that the overall form and height of the proposed development is acceptable.

7.10 Given the above, it is considered that in the context of the sites function, the proposed fencing would not be detrimental to the character or appearance of the MOL or the wider area.

Neighbour amenity.

7.11 SPP policy DM D2 states that proposals must be designed to ensure that they would not have an undue negative impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light, quality of living conditions, privacy, visual intrusion and noise.

7.12 The proposed fencing would have a separation distance of approximately 25m to the nearest residential buildings. The proposed fencing would have a high level of opacity, allowing light and sight to easily travel through the netting. Given the proximity and characteristics of the proposed fencing, it is not considered to result in any undue adverse effects on the amenity of surrounding properties.

Flood risk.

7.13 SPP policy DM F1 and CS policy CS16 require development to mitigate the effects of flooding.

7.14 The proposal has been reviewed by LBM Flood Risk Management Engineer and by the Environment Agency; both have advised that due to the limited length of the proposed fencing, it would not exacerbate flooding in the area.

Transport and road safety.

7.15 Core Strategy policy CS20 requires that development would not adversely affect pedestrian or cycle movements, safety, the convenience of local residents, on street parking or traffic management.

7.16 Merton's Transport Planning officers have reviewed the application and advised that it is reasonable to assume that the proposed ball catch would decrease incidence of balls straying on to the road, thereby increasing road safety.

7.17 Objections were received in relation to the proposal increasing parking pressure and obstructing traffic flow. The proposals do not change the parking capacity on site or the number of sports pitches and it is noted that Merton's Transport Planning officers have not objected to the proposal.

Other matters.

7.18 Objections were received in relation to the devaluation of surrounding properties, it is noted that this is not a planning consideration.



## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The principle of development is considered to be acceptable. The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact upon the character, appearance and function of the metropolitan open land and the wider area. It is not considered the proposed development would have an undue adverse impact upon the amenity of surrounding properties or flooding. It is considered the proposed development would have a positive influence upon road safety.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. A1 Commencement of Development (full application)
2. A7 Approved Plans
3. B3 Materials as Specified
4. Temporary fencing shall be installed in accordance with drawing No: 2015-02 prior to the commencement of the works and shall remain in place for the duration of the works; the temporary fencing shall be removed upon completion of the works.

No works in relation to the construction of the proposed permanent fencing shall be undertaken from the area beyond the temporary fencing (between the temporary fencing and hedge rows).

Reason: To protect and safeguard the existing retained trees in accordance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policy 7.21 of the London Plan 2011, policy CS13 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policies DM D2 and DM 02 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

5. The development hereby approved shall maintain a minimum separation distance of 1.5m from the existing hedgerow along the western boundary of the site.

Reason: To minimise the impact upon the habitat of the Pyl Brook Wildlife Site and SINC and protected species, in accordance with SPP policy DMO2, CS policy CS13 and London Plan policy 7.19.

Informative: The Council's contractor shall be briefed by the client prior to the commencement of the works to highlight that the area beyond the temporary fencing is strictly off limits during works to erect the ball catch fencing.

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