

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

21 MARCH 2019

APPLICATION NO. **DATE VALID**
18/P0183 13/12/2017

Address/Site Wimbledon Rugby Football Club, Beverley Meads,
Barham Road, West Wimbledon, SW20 0ET

Ward **Village**

Proposal: Installation of artificial grass on existing rugby pitch with associated hard and soft landscaping, fencing and floodlighting.

Drawing Nos HLS03442, MUK18546 1-02 A, 1-03, 1-04, 1-05, 1-06, 1-07, Duralock fencing details CodePR1200/3-Halfmesh, Planning Statement, Floodlighting details produced by Siteco, Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Report, Transport Statement, Technical Design Note dated 13th February 2019, Ground Investigation Report, preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Review of Lighting Proposals and Bat Mitigation.

Contact Officer: Richard Allen (020 8545 3621)

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions

CHECKLIST INFORMATION

- Heads of agreement: No
- Is a screening opinion required: No
- Is an Environmental impact statement required: No
- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been submitted: No
- Press notice- Yes
- Site notice-Yes
- Design Review Panel consulted-No
- Number neighbours consulted – 34
- External consultants: None
- Density: n/a
- Number of jobs created: n/a
- Archaeology Priority Zone: No

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application has been brought to the Planning Applications Committee due to the number of objections received.

2. **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 The Wimbledon Rugby Football Club Sports ground has a site area of approximately 9.8 hectares. The sports ground lies on the west side of Barham Road and accommodates 12 rugby pitches, tennis courts and two pavilions one surfaced car park and two overflow car parks accessed from Preston Road. The pavilion building subject of the current application fronts Barham Road with the rugby pitch to the west of the pavilion. The application site is designated as Metropolitan Open Land. The site surroundings comprise residential property to the east and south. The site is not within a Conservation Area; however, the Drax Avenue Conservation Area is located to the east. The very western part of the site lies within flood zone 2.

3. **CURRENT PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The current proposal involves the installation of artificial grass on existing rugby pitch with associated hard and soft landscaping, fencing and floodlighting, together with provision of associated storage container.
- 3.2 The development consists of a 114 metre x 68 metre synthetic pitch area including a 4 metre run off to all sides and a 6 metre dead ball area. The playing area comprises a 94 metre x 60 metre and denoted by 100mm wide white line markings. The surface will consist of sand and rubber infill 3G synthetic carpet system.
- 3.3 The playing pitch will be enclosed by a 1.2 metre high Durlock 3 rail fencing system with single and double gates to enable general access as well as access for maintenance and emergency purposes.
- 3.4 A new storage container will be provided to the north east corner of the pitch to enable the storage of equipment and kit. The storage container will comprise steel material, and be clad with RFU signage to the pitch side. The metal container will be 12200mm x 2430mm x 2590mm.
- 3.5 Adjacent to the existing pavilion will be the players entrance consisting of 2 no. single and 1 no. double gates, one adjacent to the storage container and one to the north-east corner of the pitch, will be for emergency vehicle access from the car park.
- 3.6 There will be new perimeter and link paths 3 metres in width around the pitch which will be black porous macadam. Steps will be introduced between the pavilion and the player's entrance to overcome the variation in ground levels. Also on the south side of the pitch there will be 2 no. home away dugouts and technical areas (grass surfaced).
- 3.7 The floodlighting will consist of 6 galvanised 15 metres floodlight columns with A3 MAXI luminaires to provide the required light levels for the new pitch whilst also controlling light spill glare and upward light leakage.

4. **PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 In March 1989 planning permission was granted by the Planning Applications Committee for the erection of four x 16 metre high floodlight columns (LBM Ref.88/P1641).
- 4.2 In August 1990 planning permission was granted under delegated powers for the three x 10 metre high floodlight columns at the edge of the training pitch in Barham Road (LBM Ref.90/P0720).
- 4.3 In May 1996 planning permission was granted for the installation of a water storage tank for pitch irrigation in north west corner of the car park (LBM Ref.95/P0250).
- 4.4 In July 1996 planning permission was granted by the Planning Applications Committee for alterations and extensions to the changing rooms and club room (LBM Ref.96/P0414).
- 4.5 In January 2003 planning permission was refused under delegated powers for the installation of telecommunications equipment mounted on a 22.5 metre high monopole (LBM Ref.02/P1512).
- 4.6 In February 2003 planning permission was refused under delegated powers installation of telecommunications equipment mounted on a 22 metre high column together with equipment cabin (LB Ref.02/P2151).
- 4.7 In December 2006 planning permission was granted under delegated powers for the installation of six x 15 metre high floodlight columns to the football pitch (LBM Ref.06/P2331).
- 4.8 In April 2009 planning permission was granted under delegated powers for the erection of extensions to the existing clubhouse and formation of an external terrace area (LBM Ref.09/P0421).
- 4.9 In November 2011 planning permission was granted under delegated powers for the resurfacing of existing grass parking area with loose granular material (LBM Ref.11/P2249).
- 4.10 In January 2012 planning permission was granted for the resurfacing of the tennis courts and the installation of 6 x 6 metre high floodlight columns and floodlights (LBM Ref.11/P3322).
- 4.11 In February 2012 planning application was refused for the erection of a side extension to existing club house to provide changing rooms (LBM Ref.12/P0087).
- 4.12 In August 2012 a pre-application meeting was held in respect of the erection of a first floor extension to existing club house (LBM Ref.12/P2143/NEW).

- 4.13 In January 2013 a planning application was submitted for the resurfacing of existing tennis courts and erection of 6 x 10 metre high steel floodlights (LBM Ref.12/P2858). However the application was withdrawn by the applicant on 31 January 2015.
- 4.14 In July 2014 planning permission was granted for the erection of a single storey and first floor side extension to the existing club house to provide additional changing, training and seminar rooms (LBM Ref.14/P1995).
- 4.15 In December 2016 planning permission was refused for the creation of a four lane, non-turf cricket practice area and match pitches (LBM Ref15/P0839). Planning permission was refused on the grounds that:-

'The propose four lane non-turf cricket practice pitch and associated netting would constitute a visually intrusive feature and would result in further erosion of the character of the Metropolitan Open land contrary to policy DM O1 (open Space) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Polices Plan (2014)'.

5. **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by Conservation Area site and press notice procedure and letters of notification have been sent to surrounding neighbouring properties. In response 70 objections have been received. The grounds of objection are set out below:-

- The proposal would result in artificial turf and associated structures replacing natural grass and would affect the character of the area.
- The proposal would damage the appearance of the MOL.
- Will damage the tranquil location.
- Impact upon drainage and increase risk localised flooding.
- The Wimbledon RFC cannot cope with the number of visitors to the club at present and the proposal will make traffic/parking worse.
- Creeping development upon MOL and intensification of use.
- Negative impact upon wildlife.
- Parking provision at the club is inadequate.
- Barham Road is not wide enough for coaches visiting the club and cannot cope with any more traffic.
- The use of the site has intensified over the last 15 years, but there has been no change to parking provision or access.
- The site is inappropriate for further development due to lack of public transport and the site has the lowest accessibility score (PTAL 0).
- The WRFC has failed to deliver reasonable behaviour from their visitors or control parking give that access to the club is via a Private Road.
- The proposal would reduce the wilderness of the area and reduce the amount of birdlife due to the loss of grass.
- Residents are already affect by events at the club including commercial events booked on every Friday and Saturday in June and July. The club is intended to be a local community sports facility, not a bar, nightclub or commercial sports facility available for hire.

- The proposal would result in a radical change of outlook for adjacent residents.
- The benefits of the scheme appear to be limited to the rugby club only and not the wider community.
- The odd weekend cricket or rugby game does not concern residents who live nearby, however the seven days a week use and the commercialisation of the area with artificial grass, fencing and floodlighting and a considerable increase in traffic does concern residents.
- The WRFC has not undertaken any consultation with local residents before submitting the application.
- The access and traffic issues to the club are significant and should be considered as a whole as they affect the viability of the project.
- The surrounding MOL and access and traffic would make the provision of an all-weather pitch unviable.
- Barham, Hood and Preston Roads are private roads and are the only means of access to the site.
- The application fails to resolve issues of traffic and parking and inadequate access. Any increase in parking on MOL would be contrary to policy.
- The transport links, parking and access issues to the site are unresolvable and the application should be refused.
- There is a concern that the application will be considered at either the July or August planning committee meeting when residents are away.
- It is inconceivable that there are no other suitable locations within the M25 for an all-weather rugby pitch.
- There are other existing clubs that could be developed that are not within MOL.
- A Transport Assessment and legal opinion has been undertaken on behalf of the occupiers of properties in Barham Road.

5.2 Support for Proposal

18 letters have been received supporting the proposal and the comments are summarised below:-

- The new pitch will allow for continued use of the facilities when weather has made other pitches unplayable.
- The proposal will mean that some games will no longer be cancelled due to weather.
- The all-weather pitch will enable the club to undertake more outreach work with the community.
- The rugby club is a great community resource for playing of rugby, netball, cricket and other sports and provides opportunities for Merton residents to play sport from 5 year olds to 50 plus veterans. The club is non-profit making and supports all ability levels for men, women, children and people with special needs. The proposal will allow the WRFC to expand its community programme.
- The proposal will be a great addition to an outstanding community facility.
- The proposed All-weather pitch would be a massive boost for local schools that already use the pitches and potentially get more people active and healthy.
- The proposal would be a wonderful addition to the facilities at the club although the parking concerns of residents are noted. However, there is an

overflow car park accessed of Preston Road. Weather sometimes prohibits the use of this grass car park. If grass reinforcement was in place the Preston Road car park could be used all year round address issues in Barham road
-The community benefits far outweigh the limited impact of the proposal.

5.3 Residents Association of West Wimbledon

The site is owned by the Council as is adjacent to Wimbledon Common and Beverly Brook and bounded on two sides by woodland designated to the west as a Local Nature Reserve, SINC, MOL and Green Corridor. The strip of land between the playing fields and the brook is designated as a SINC, MOL and green corridor and the playing fields carry the designations of MOL and green corridor. The area therefore merits special protection. It is also within the Flood Plain and nearby Beverley Brook serves as part of the natural flood drainage system. The proposed development would therefore interrupt and adversely affects the sense of openness and conflicts with the character of the area and enjoyment of amenity and conflicts with the MOL designation. The proposed bunds serve no purpose other than saving on the cost of disposing of waste soil. This type of development is better suited to a Brown field site with better access to public transport. The proposal would also result in serious loss of amenity to local residents. It is proposed that the floodlighting would be used between 09.00am to 10.00pm on Mondays to Fridays and 09.00am to 08.00pm on Saturdays and Sundays. An increase in the hours of use will inevitably result in a substantial increase in the volume of use. This will lead to intrusion of noise, artificial light and traffic would be continuous throughout the week. There would also be a large increase in traffic movements on nearby residential roads giving the only access to the playing fields. The site is poorly served by public transport and there would be safety issues with pedestrians and residents as the narrow streets have no pedestrian footways and are shared spaces for all road users. The new all-weather pitch would be close to houses particularly the garden of 54 Barham Road and the occupants of 54 would suffer loss of amenity due to the intensification of use. It is clear that the proposal would be harmful to the local environment and conflict with MOL policy.

5.4 North West Wimbledon Residents Association

The application will enable more intensive use of the facilities, throughout the week and at weekends. Currently there are problems with the flow of traffic and parking every time the pitches are in use, particularly when coaches arrive or leave and each weekend the pitches are in use by large numbers. Application 14/P1955 doubled the size of the changing room capacity from 70 to 151 people. The WRFC pitches are used all week in school terms. In addition the WRFC runs six adult teams each weekend and equivalent to 99 people including officials but excluding spectators. In addition the WRFC hosts 500 children sessions for mini-rugby on Sundays. Spectators add to the number of people at any event. Barham Road is not a wide road and two cars cannot pass down the road. Preston Road has the same problem. The amount of traffic at peak times is beyond what these small private roads can carry and the amenity of residents is already adversely affected.

The proposal involves installation of floodlights. Planning permission 06/P2331 allowed six lighting columns on the pitch to the west of the current proposal and was approved subject to limited hours of use 08.00am to 09.30pm weekdays and 08.00am to 07.00pm on Saturdays and no lighting on Sundays. More recently lighting on the resurfaced tennis courts was approved for use from 08.00am to 09.30pm weekdays and 08.00am to 07.00pm on Saturdays and not on Sunday's. The proposed lighting would be closer to residential properties and would be more intrusive.

Policy CS13 of the Merton Core Planning Strategy states that the Council will protect and enhance the boroughs public and private open space including MOL. The current application would erode the open character of the MOL with fencing and tarmac around the pitch. An application for four non-turf Cricket pitches has previously been refused. The position of the 'bunds' beside the car park would obstruct access from the car park to Fishpond Wood. The increased use of the pitch would harm the amenity of neighbours in Barham road and Beverley Meads.

5.5 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators

The Common Conservators have a statutory duty to maintain Wimbledon Common and to protect and preserve its amenity and natural aspect for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. Conservation of the Commons is a fundamental concern to the Conservators who are wholly committed to maintaining and protecting and preserving this valued and important public open space. The defining characteristic of the Commons is its openness, and its sense of natural landscape and countryside, enclosed within its boundaries with the city beyond. It is an important part of this character that the fringes of the Commons do not disclose imposing built form, but rather allow any glimpsed buildings and structures to recede into the landscape, with historic views towards particular parts of the urban area protected. The balance between the open and natural aspect of the Commons and the buildings that surround it, but largely hidden from it are of a scale and massing that does not compromise the openness, is difficult one to achieve in an urban setting, but is the balance that is critical to its character and one that must be preserved. The current development proposals, to install a full sized rugby pitch on playing fields which id floodlit till potentially 10.00pm every evening represents a significant impact on the current site and has potential implications on the adjacent Wimbledon Common. The applicant should therefore prepare a construction and environmental management plan. The impact on nocturnal animals is also a concern and the Conservators recommend that a condition of approval is that the flood lights are no use outside the hours of 08.00am to 08.00pm Monday to Sunday (including Bank Holidays).

5.6 Sport England

Sport England has been consulted and state that the application has been considered in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework (Para 74) and Sport England's policy on planning applications affecting playing fields 'A Sporting Future for the Playing fields of England'. Sport England's policy is to oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would

lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of all or any part of a playing field, unless one or more of the five exceptions stated in the policy apply.

- 5.7 The proposed Impact on Playing Field -It is proposed to locate an artificial grass pitch on an existing rugby pitch at Wimbledon Rugby Club. The proposal will result in the existing grass pitch being replaced with an artificial surface. The new pitch would be fenced and floodlit.
- 5.8 Assessment Against Sport England Policy -The application relates to the provision of a new outdoor sports facility on the existing playing field at the above site. It therefore needs to be considered against exception E5 of the above policy which states: (Policy E5) 'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of playing field or playing fields'.
- 5.9 Sport England has therefore assessed the existing and proposed playing fields against the above policy to determine whether the proposals meet exception E5.
- 5.10 Sport England has consulted the relevant governing bodies on the proposals. The Rugby Football Union (RFU) has confirmed that this is a key site for rugby in the local area and that the proposed pitch is part of the RFU Rugby Turf programme. The RFU is the applicant and the site has been identified for this pitch following a national analysis of pitch provision. This national programme of artificial grass pitch delivery is seeking to increase match and training capacity in areas where natural turf pitches are overused. The programme aims to improve the quality and consistency of training provision across the country and create a Rugby World Cup legacy. This particular site has been chosen as the RFU is confident it can be appropriately managed and maintained for the longer term. The pitch will be fully funded by the RFU, including full refurbishment/replacement for the duration of a 30 year lease. The pitch will be designed to be World Rugby Regulation 22 compliant with 200 lux floodlighting. The pitch will benefit a range of local community clubs and users through its extended hours.
- 5.11 The Football Foundation (on behalf of the FA) has confirmed that there is limited football use of this site and that there may be interest from local football users for the pitch. The lawn Tennis association has confirmed there will be no adverse impact upon the neighbouring tennis courts. As the proposal is advanced by the RFU and will meet a recognised need for rugby in the local area, it will meet an identified need for artificial pitch provision. There will be no adverse impact on any other sports users of the site.
- 5.12 Given the above assessment, Sport England wishes to support this application as it is considered to meet exception E5 of the above policy. As the site is part of the RFU Rugby Turf Programme, Sport England is satisfied that the design and operation of the facility will meet national governing body and Sport England design guidance. However, Sport England note that the facility will require evening opening hours to ensure that the facility is

sustainable and provide extensive use by the community. Sport England's model planning condition that limits the hours of operation to 08.00am to 10.00pm Mondays to Fridays and 08.00am to 10.00 on Saturdays and 08.00am to 08.00pm on Sundays and public holidays is considered appropriate in this instance.

5.13 Conservation Officer
No objections.

5.14 Flood Risk Manager

The site lies close to but just outside of Floodzone 2 and is therefore in Floodzone 1 (low probability). The site is not shown to be at high risk of surface water flooding according to the latest surface water flood risk maps by the Environment Agency, although areas to the north and north west of the site could be affected by exceedance flow paths from the golf course to the Beverley Brook, main river. A drainage strategy has been undertaken and submitted. The detailed design of the drainage lies outside of the scope of the report submitted and therefore this must be secured by way of a planning condition. The detailed drainage design is down to the specialist pitch designer. Ground investigation was undertaken on site. Some infiltration potential exists, although groundwater was found at a relatively shallow level of 1.1m bgl. The Environment Agency normally advise at least 1m between the base of the infiltration device and maximum expected groundwater level. It is noted that the infiltration capacity will be exceeded during storm events and at which point, the pitch drainage needs to be positive but restricted/attenuated discharge to the nearest watercourse/surface water sewer.

5.15 The existing greenfield runoff rate has been calculated to be 3.6l/s and this is proposed to be the maximum discharge rate, post development for all storms up to and including the 1 in 100 year climate change (+40%) event. There are some impermeable areas including footpaths, but these will need to drain into permeable areas such as the pitch sub-base or filter/french drains. The hydraulic calculations provided in the submitted report show that a storage volume of 260m³ is required in order to restrict offsite flows to the greenfield rate. The Flood Risk Manager does, however, have some concerns in that the SIS Pitches plan MUK1846 1-01 Rev A shows two possible locations for top soil deposition and one of these is located within Flood Zone 2 and close to Flood Zone 3. This could displace floodwaters in extreme events and would need approval from the Environment Agency. Top soil deposition should be located outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3. If officers are however minded to recommend that permission be granted then surface water drainage and construction method statement conditions would be appropriate. A condition would also be required to secure final positions of the top soil deposition locations, in consultation with the Environment Agency.

5.16 Environmental Health

The Councils Environmental Health officer has no objections to the proposal subject to conditions being attached to any grant of planning permission in respect of noise levels and external lighting.

5.17 Transport Planning

The site is currently accessed via a gated barrier feature at the northern section of Barham Road. This section of Barham Road, approximately 200m to the north of the junction with Drax Avenue, is a private road. The remaining sections of Barham Road are adopted and provide 2.0m footways and street lighting to both sides of the carriageway. The re-development proposals only include the reconstruction of one of the existing pitches, and transforming it into a new 3G pitch, with associated features and benefits.

5.18 In order to assess the present and future parking demand the applicant has carried out parking surveys on most effective time periods. In consultation with RFU the busiest week for a survey is identified on the week commencing 21st January 2019 when following fixtures are schedule to take place.

- Men's and women's Sunday league matches
- Youth rugby on Sunday mornings; and
- School activities during the weekdays.

During this week the surveys would record the worst-case scenario in terms of maximum vehicles attracting to the location.

The most effective time periods to survey the site was as follows:

- Wednesday 23rd January - 14:00 - 20:00;
- Saturday 26th January - 09:00 - 15:00; and
- Sunday 27th January - 09:00 - 15:00.

5.19 Car Park 1

This car park is accessed via Barham Road. Barham Road is a private un-adopted Road. The car park has capacity for up to 62 vehicles in the formal parking area, with a small 'informal' overspill area for an additional 10 vehicles to the rear of the car park. The total vehicle capacity of Car Park 1 equates to 72 vehicles. The parking survey done on Wednesday 23rd January during the hours of 14:00 - 20:00 shows that the car parking capacity reached a total of 44 vehicles during 15:30 - 16:00, which equates to a car parking occupancy of 71% within the formal car park, and 61% of the TOTAL car park.

The week- end survey conducted on Saturday 26th / Sunday 27th January during the hours of 09:00 -15:00 shows on the Saturday the car parking capacity reached a total of 66 vehicles during 14:30 - 15:00, which equates to a car parking occupancy of 106% within the formal car park, and 92% of the TOTAL car park. During this period 4 vehicles utilised the 'informal' overspill area to the rear of the car park.

On the Sunday the car parking capacity reached a total of 70 vehicles during 10:00 - 11:00, which equates to a car parking occupancy of 113% within the formal car park, and 97% of the TOTAL car park. Again, during this period 8 vehicles utilised the 'informal' overspill area to the rear of the car park.

5.20 Car Park 2

Car Park 2 is accessed from Preston Road via Hood Road and Barham Road. Preston Road and Hood Road are both un-adopted private roads.

This car park has capacity for up to 60 vehicles.

The weekday surveys (Wednesday 23rd January) results indicate that the car parking capacity reached a total of 30 vehicles during 15:00 - 15:30, which equates to a car parking occupancy of 50%.

The weekend surveys (Saturday 26th / Sunday 27th January) results indicate that on the Saturday the car parking capacity reached a total of 46 vehicles during 10:00 - 10:30, which equates to a car parking occupancy of 77%. On the Sunday the car parking capacity reached a total of 53 vehicles during 10:30 - 11:00, which equates to a car parking occupancy of 88%.

- 5.21 Given the results of the vehicle parking survey, it is clear that the site is experiencing full capacity within car park 1 during the weekend periods. However, the evidence provided illustrates that there is still vehicle car parking capacity within car park 2 during this period. Notwithstanding, during the weekday it is clear that there are no capacity issues present.

Car park 1 is a public carpark, and is therefore accessed and utilised frequently by the general public for a variety of leisure activities. As such, the car parking numbers reported in the survey are not solely made up of existing users of the rugby club facilities, and capacity analysis produced is considered satisfactory.

5.22 On Street Parking Survey

The residential un-restricted car parking locations on-street within the study area include spaces along the following streets: Almer Road; Barnham Road; Burdett Avenue; Copse Hill; Drax Avenue Ellerton Road; Hood Road; Lindisfarne Road; Melville Avenue; Preston Road; and Wolsey Close. The weekday surveys were carried out on Wednesday 23rd January during the hours of 14:00 - 20:00, with the results showing that the on-street vehicle parking capacity only reached a maximum vehicle parking occupancy of 65% during the survey period, which was along Drax Avenue located approximately 300m to the south of the site. Additionally, the weekday survey period also identified that the nearest on street parking to the site, Barnham Road, only had a vehicle parking occupancy of 18% during the survey period. The weekend surveys took place on Saturday 26th / Sunday 27th January during the hours of 09:00 - 15:00. During the Saturday surveys the results showed that the on-street vehicle parking capacity reached a maximum vehicle parking occupancy of 47% during the survey period, which was along Hood Road located approximately 400m to the south of the site. Additionally, the Saturday survey period also identified that the nearest on-street parking to the site, Barnham Road, had a vehicle parking occupancy of 25% during the survey period.

- 5.23 During the Sunday surveys the results showed that the on-street vehicle parking capacity only reached a maximum vehicle parking occupancy of 50% during the survey period, which was along Burdett Avenue located

approximately 550m to the south of the site. Additionally, the Sunday survey period also identified that the nearest on-street parking to the site, Barnham Road, had a vehicle parking occupancy of 19% during the survey period.

From the survey evidence presented, it is clear that the vehicles associated with the existing site do not present any parking occupancy concerns upon the surrounding residential on-street un-restricted parking, in particular the closest road to the site - Barnham Road.

5.24 Proposed Use of the Site

The proposed re-development of the site includes the reconstruction of 1 of the existing pitches, transforming it into a new 3G pitch. This is not therefore an additional new facility. The new 3G pitch will benefit from floodlighting and will therefore allow the site to facilitate outdoor matches / training for longer periods during the darker months. The site effectively becomes weather proof allowing for play during adverse weather conditions. However, this is not an increase to the operational times of the site. The existing site currently has a number of events from 10:00 - 22:00, 7days a week, throughout the whole year. The existing site already facilities outdoor training for longer periods during the summer months when daylight is available for longer periods.

5.25 Traffic Generation

The re-development proposals only include the reconstruction of 1 of the existing pitches that can be used now, and transforming it into a new 3G pitch. Therefore, it is anticipated that no additional 'new' trips will be generated by the re-development of the site, and the operational hours will remain as per the existing arrangement. Following request from Council's highways team the applicant has re-visited the vehicle trip rates / generation assessments presented within the previous Transport Statement. Therefore, to calculate the associated vehicle trips, the same trip rates and methodology used within the previously submitted TS has then been used. To summarise, this methodology uses the trip rates obtained from the TRICS Database with the trip rates then being multiplied by 3 to account for the additional players as part of a rugby team in comparison to a 5-a-side team. This methodology is considered satisfactory as the development is for an improvement of one of the existing pitches within the playing field.

5.26 The existing site is calculated to result in a maximum 4 one-way vehicle trips during the weekday AM peak period (08.00-09.00) and 11 one-way vehicle trips during the weekday PM peak period (17.00-18.00). This equates to one trip every 15 to 10 minutes respectively. During the Saturday peak period (12.00 – 13.00) the existing site is calculated to result in a maximum 15 one-way vehicle trips. Volumetrically, this equates to just less than 1 vehicle trip every 12 minutes in the Saturday peak period. Therefore, with the re-development proposals in place, the site effectively becomes a more weather hardened version of the existing facility i.e. the pitch cannot become cancelled due to inclement weather, and is more hard wearing. As such it allows the facilities to be used during the darker winter months.

5.27 Recommendation

The proposed re-development site will not pose a significant threat to either the existing or the future forecast traffic or parking capacity on the surrounding highway network or within the existing car park. Therefore, there are no highways objections to the proposal subject to a condition regarding the submission of a Demolition/Construction Logistic Plan (including a Construction Management plan in accordance with TfL guidance) being imposed on any grant of planning permission.

6. **POLICY CONTEXT**

6.1 Adopted Merton Core Strategy (July 2011)

CS6 (Surrounding Area of Wimbledon Town Centre), CS11 (Infrastructure), CS13 (Open Space, Nature Conservation, Leisure and Culture), (CS14 (Design), CS16 (Flood Risk Management), CS19 (Public Transport) and CS20 (Parking, Servicing and Delivery).

6.2 Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014)

DM O1 (Open Space), DM O2 (Nature Conservation, Trees, Hedges and Landscape Features), DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments), DM D4 (Managing Heritage assets), DM EP2 (Reducing and Mitigating Noise), DM F1 (Support for Flood Risk Management), DM T1 (Support for Sustainable and Active Travel), DM F2 (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Wastewater and water Infrastructure), DMT2 (Transport Impacts of Development), DM T3 (Car Parking Standards) and DM T5 (Access to Road Networks).

6.3 The London Plan (March 2016)

Policy 3.19 (Sports facilities), 5.12 (Flood Risk Management), 7.8 (Heritage and Archaeology), 7.17 (Metropolitan Open Land) and 7.19 (Biodiversity and Access to Nature).

6.4 Other Planning Policy Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018)
Merton Open Space Study (2010/2011)
Merton Sports Pitch Strategy (2011)

7. **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 The main planning considerations concern the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), impact on the local area and adjacent Conservation Area, provision of sports facilities, impact on neighbour amenity, transport and parking issues and impact on biodiversity, flooding and drainage issues.

7.2 Impact on the Character and Appearance of MOL

The application site falls within Metropolitan Open Land. London Plan policy 7.17 (MOL) makes it clear that inappropriate development will be refused

except in very special circumstances, and the NPPF paragraphs 79-92 apply equally to MOL as well as Green Belt. NPPF paragraph 145 states that an exception to inappropriate development in Green Belt is 'provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it'. The current application involves the laying out of an All-weather floodlit rugby pitch, which is an upgrade of an existing rugby pitch at the Wimbledon Rugby Club. It is considered that there would be no detrimental impact upon the openness of the MOL as a result of the proposals given the location of the new All-weather grass pitch adjacent to the existing pavilion building and the existing floodlighting to the west of the site. The flood lighting would comprise 6 galvanised 15 metre floodlight columns. The lighting columns would be tall artificial structures, but are thin in their design and would not have a harmful effect on the openness of the MOL. The proposed fencing around the proposed All-weather pitch has been designed to be as unobtrusive as possible and would comprise half open mesh and would be 1.2 metres in height, thus maintaining views into and from the site. The proposed All-weather pitch would have a flat surface. To accommodate this, there would be a gradual raising of the pitch towards the western end. This would have some impact on the current open character. However, it would be raised at a maximum of 1.5 metres via a grass bank. It is considered therefore overall that the proposal would be appropriate for the site's location within MOL and would not harm its openness.

- 7.3 Policy DM O1 of the Adopted Sites and Policies Plan (2014) seeks to protect and enhance open space and states that the Council will continue to protect Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and designated open spaces from inappropriate development in accordance with London Plan and government guidance. It is considered that the current proposal satisfies MOL exception policy within the context of the NPPF and is therefore not inappropriate development in MOL. Policy DM O1 (Open Space) is the relevant policy within the Council's Adopted Sites and Policy Plan concerning development proposals within designated open spaces.
- 7.4 Paragraph 'b' of the policy outlines that existing designated open space should not be built on unless: i) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or ii) 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 iii) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss. In considering the above, officers note that the proposal would replace an existing grass sports pitch with an artificial grass sports pitch. The application has outlined the benefits of such a facility for sport, such as all year round use. Further, the proposal is directly related to sport and outdoor recreational use. Officers consider that the proposal complies with the above criterion ii) and iii).

7.5 The policy goes on to outline that where proposals have met one of the criteria above, then paragraph 'c' of the policy states that development within designated open spaces will be expected to meet the following criteria: i) the proposals are of a high quality design and do not harm the character, appearance or function of the open space, ii) the proposals retain and/or improve public access between existing public areas and open spaces through the creation of new and more direct footpath and cycle path links; and iii) the character and function of leisure walks and green chains are preserved or enhanced.

7.7 The proposal involves development on Metropolitan Open Land to provide an 'all weather playing pitch' constructed with high quality materials. Although the development would alter the character of the existing open space, the hard surfaced pitch would be surrounded by grass banking to soften the boundary between the playing surface and the new pitch surface. Floodlighting would be provided for the pitch, however there are existing floodlit pitches nearby and the provision of an 'all weather' floodlit pitch would not significantly alter the open character of the area and the function of the open space would remain as existing, i.e. sports pitches. The proposed development would not affect public access to the open space for leisure walks and the green chain would be maintained. Therefore it is considered that the proposal would satisfy the criteria and meets the criteria tests.

7.7 Provision of Sports Facilities

The Merton Sports Pitch Strategy discusses the condition of sports pitches throughout Merton, and concludes that improvements to existing facilities (club houses and pitches) should be encouraged. It also discusses further exploration of the role of 3G pitches in reducing demands on grass pitches and providing new opportunities for training and competition. The proposal to upgrade the existing pitch to 3G standard complies with the Council's strategy. Therefore the provision of a 3G pitch at Wimbledon Rugby Football Club would outweigh the loss of a grass pitch. Sport England support the proposal as it meets the criteria for an exception to Sport England policy E5 which states that 'the proposed development for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of playing field or playing fields'. Sport England therefore Support the proposal and recommend the application of their model planning condition on hours of use.

7.8 Impact on the Conservation Area

The Wimbledon Rugby Club is located off Barham road which is close to the boundary with the Merton (Drax Avenue) Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is characterised by large dwellings set within large plots with mature tree planting. Although the proposal involves the installation of floodlighting, the flood lights would be sited circa 100 metres away from the boundary with the Conservation Area and the floodlights are considered to be of suitable distance not to cause harm. It is therefore considered that the proposal would not have a harmful impact upon the setting of the adjacent

Conservation Area and the proposal is acceptable in terms of Policy DM D4 (Managing Heritage Assets).

7.9 Impact on Neighbour Amenity

Policy DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014) seeks to ensure that the potential impact of new development has regard for neighbour amenity. In this instance, the nearest residential properties are located to the south-east of the site and to the south. These comprise of properties in Barham Road and Preston Road. The rear boundaries of the properties on Barham Road benefit from planting and close boarded fencing that forms a natural barrier between residential properties and the playing fields. The outlook from most of these properties will remain largely unchanged. However, the closest properties to the proposal (Numbers 50, 52 and 54) would have some effect on outlook due to the position of the floodlighting. The proposed pitch would be set into the ground at its eastern end (nearest the properties in Barham Road) and with a low perimeter fence surround, officers are satisfied the siting of the pitch and fence would not cause harm to neighbour amenity. The change in outlook from the residential properties would not significantly change.

7.10 The applicants have undertaken a Noise Impact Assessment (dated 10 September 2018). Although the proposal would replace an existing grass rugby pitch, it would be sited further south and east, and thereby being closer to residential properties in Barham Road. The Assessment concluded that there would be no adverse impact. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has assessed the Noise Impact Assessment and outlines that the artificial pitch could lead to an increase in noise levels generated. However, it is recommended that a safeguarding condition is applied to ensure that noise levels do not exceed a maximum noise level.

7.11 Although the proposed floodlighting may alter the night-time outlook from residential properties in Barham Road, Preston Road and Hood Road the impact of the additional floodlights is considered to be minimal as the lighting units have been designed to minimise light overspill. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has assessed the pitch and type of flood lights and raises no objection, but recommends a condition to ensure amenity is safeguarded. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be some intensification of use of the site by the provision of floodlighting and in terms of potential noise, the proposed restrictions on the use of the floodlights would prevent activities extending beyond 10.00pm. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable subject to conditions restricting hours of use of the floodlights and noise limitation condition. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of Policy DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments).

7.12 Transport/Parking Issues

Policies CS20 (Parking, Servicing and Delivery) of the Adopted Merton Core Planning Strategy (2011) DM T2 (Transport Impacts of Developments) and (DM T3 (Car Parking and Servicing Standards) of the Adopted Merton Sites

and Policies Plan (2014) require developers to demonstrate that their development would not adversely affect pedestrian and cycle movements, safety, the convenience of local residents or the quality of bus movements and/or facilities; on street parking and traffic management and provision of parking to the council's current standards.

- 7.13 The access to the site and parking arrangements and delivery/servicing arrangements are to remain as existing as the proposal involves the replacement of one of the existing pitches, with a new 3 G pitch. Although Wimbledon Rugby Club play and have training at the site, it is also used by Schools for sporting activity. The proposal would provide a playing pitch facility that can be used in all weather conditions and provide a guaranteed surface for use. The application outlines that the proposal would not increase parking demand/pressure at peak times as it will replace an existing pitch. It is therefore anticipated that there would be no additional trip generation at peak times as a result of the proposed development and this is confirmed by the Transport Statement that accompanies the application.
- 7.14 Following discussions with the Council's Transport Planning Officer, the applicant commissioned parking surveys, which were undertaken on Wednesday 23rd, Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th January 2019 at the site. The Council's Transport Planning Officer has examined the applicant's parking surveys and has stated that the development would not pose a significant threat to either the existing or the future traffic or parking capacity on the surrounding highway network or within the existing car park.
- 7.15 Therefore, the proposal would not have any adverse impact upon traffic/parking in the vicinity of the application site and that the proposal is acceptable in terms of policies DM T2 (Transport Impacts of Developments), DMT3 (Parking Standards) and DM T5 (Access to Road Network).
- 7.16 Impact on Biodiversity

The applicant has undertaken an Ecological Appraisal. The survey noted that the application site is approximately 10 hectares in area and is located in a predominately residential area. The site topography falls gradually in a western direction towards Beverly Brook, which delineated the site's western boundary. At the time of the survey the site was dominated by existing amenity grassland playing fields, an artificial turf tennis court and associated flood lighting for pitches and tennis court. There are scattered trees in limited numbers within the site and along the boundary. The Ecological Appraisal made a number of recommendations concerning the potential impact of the proposal during the construction phase upon protected species, Wimbledon Common, Fishpond Wood and Beverley Meads, Coombe Wood and the Royal Wimbledon Golf Course. The report concluded that a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP) should be compiled for the site. This is proposed in order to minimise the potential impact of construction works on the existing ecology of the site and off site receptors and ensure that works proceed in accordance with current wildlife legislation and to capture the recommendations under Section 7 of the Ecological Appraisal.

7.17 A further Ecological Review has been undertaken by the applicants Ecologists on the use of the floodlights and Bats. The review outlines that the lighting has been designed to minimise potential impact on Bats. Light spill has been kept to a minimum to maintain dark corridors bordering the site, particularly in the areas of boundary vegetation. The review further outlines that the highest number recorded Bats in the area are of the pipistrelle species, which are identified as being relatively light tolerant. Overall, the impact of the floodlights on a Bat population has been considered by an Ecologist and restriction on use of floodlights past 10:00pm is recommended.

7.18 Flooding and Drainage Issues

The applicant has produced a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy for the proposed development that has been examined by the Council's Flood Risk Officer. The report noted that an under pitch drainage system would be used and that under the entire pitch area infiltration drainage into the underlying ground will occur where ground conditions allow, up to the percolation limit of the soil. Beyond this limit a piped drainage system is required, to discharge into a suitable watercourse or sewer. The report concluded that the surface water runoff discharge rate from the proposed pitch is equal to the existing runoff rate from the existing site, which does not increase flood risk on or off the site. The Council's Flood Risk Officer is satisfied that the proposal is acceptable subject to appropriate conditions in respect of surface water drainage detailed position of earth bunds and submission of a construction method statement.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**

8.1 The proposal does not constitute Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development. Accordingly there is no requirement for an EIA submission.

9. **CONCLUSION**

9.1 The proposed All-weather pitch with associated floodlighting offers a significant community benefit, in the form of an enhanced sports facility that will encourage participation in rugby and other sports all year round. The proposed all-weather pitch would enable increased participation including in inclement weather, encouraging a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. The proposal does involve development on Metropolitan Open Land. However, the proposal satisfies the MOL exception policy within the context of the NPPF and the proposal is considered to be appropriate in this instance.

9.2 The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of drainage and flood risk. The concerns of neighbours are however noted. Policy DM D2 of the Adopted Sites and Policies Plan states that all developments must be designed to protect the amenity of the surrounding area. The nearest residential properties are to the south-east of the site and some residential properties to the south and the daytime outlook from these properties will remain largely unchanged, with the All-weather pitch having a grass like appearance. The proposed flood lighting will alter the night-time outlook from

nearby properties, but given this relationship it is not considered to be harmful. A planning condition limiting the hours of use of the floodlights would ensure that neighbour amenity is protected.

- 9.3 The concerns regarding traffic/parking issues in Barham Road and in roads nearby have been assessed. Although no new parking is proposed, the current parking provision is in accordance with the Council's parking standards and the proposal is not expected to create any additional demand for parking at any one time and the proposal is in line with Policy CS20. Accordingly it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION

Subject to the following conditions:-

1. A.1 (Commencement of Development)
2. A.7 (Approved Drawings)
3. D.11 (Hours of Construction)
4. The light Lux levels of the flood lights shall not exceed those set out on drawing number HL503442.

Reason for condition: In the interest of neighbour amenity and to comply with Policy DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments).

5. Prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted the applicant shall submit a detailed Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) and the development shall be undertaken in accordance with agreed details. The CEMP shall capture the measures/recommendations in Section 7 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (dated November 2017).

Reason for condition: To protect the existing ecology of the site in accordance with DM O1 (Open Space) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014).

6. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a detailed scheme for the provision of surface and foul water drainage has been implemented in accordance with details that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and in consultation with Thames Water. The drainage scheme will dispose of surface water by means of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) at the agreed greenfield runoff rate (no more than 3.6l/s with no less than 260m³ attenuation provision), in accordance with drainage hierarchy contained within the London Plan Policy (5.12, 5.13 and SPG) and the advice contained within the National SuDS Standards.

Reason for condition: To reduce the risk of surface and foul water flooding to the proposed development and future users, and ensure surface water and foul flood risk does not increase offsite in accordance with Merton's policies CS16, DMF2 and the London Plan policy 5.13.

7. Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall submit a detailed construction method statement (CMS) produced by the respective contractor/s responsible for building the approved works to the approval of the Local Planning Authority. The construction method statement shall also detail how flood risk and drainage will be managed during construction and how the risk to pollution of the water environment will be mitigated.

Reason for condition: To reduce the risk of surface and foul water flooding to the proposed development and future users, and ensure surface water and foul flood risk does not increase offsite in accordance with Merton's policies CS16, DMF2 and the London Plan policy 5.13.

8. The floodlights hereby permitted shall only be in operation between the hours of 08.00 and 22.00 Monday to Saturday and between 08.00 and 20.00 on Sundays.

Reason for condition: In the interest of neighbour amenity and to comply with Policy DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014).

9. H.9 Construction Vehicles

10. The external lighting shall be positioned and angled to prevent any light spillage or glare beyond the site boundary.

Reason for condition: In the interest of neighbour amenity and to comply with Policy DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014).

11. Prior to commencement of development, details of the proposed soil Deposition locations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Environment Agency.

Reason: In the interests of flood risk and amenity, and to comply with Policies DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments) and DM F1 (Support for Flood risk Management) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014).

12. The noise levels (expressed as the equivalent continuous sound level) LAeq (1 hour), from the use associated with the new artificial grass pitch shall not exceed 55dB (1hour) at the boundary with the closest residential property.

Reason for condition: In the interest of neighbour amenity and to comply with Policy DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014).

13. The shipping container used for storage shall be removed if the Wimbledon Rugby Club cease to use the pitch and the land restored to its former condition.

Reason for condition: In the interest of neighbour amenity and to preserve the character and appearance of the MOL and to comply with policies DM D2 (Design Considerations in all Developments) and DM O2 (Nature Conservation, Trees, Hedges and Landscape Features) of the Adopted Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014).

Informatives

1. No waste material, including concrete, mortar, grout, plaster, fats, oils and chemicals shall be washed down on the highway or disposed of into the highway drainage system.
2. No surface water runoff should discharge onto the public highway including the public footway or highway. When it is proposed to connect to a public sewer, the site drainage should be separate and combined at the final manhole nearest the boundary. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required (contact no. 0845 850 2777).
3. Works to an ordinary watercourse may require the prior written consent of the Lead Local Flood Authority. We would advise that you contact Merton's flood risk engineer at the earliest opportunity to discuss any proposed works or connections to existing watercourses including ditches.

[Click here](#) for full plans and documents related to this application.

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