

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2022

APPLICATION NO.

DATE VALID

19/P4337

07/01/2020

Site Address:

Ricards Lodge High School, Lake Road, SW19 7HB

Ward:

Village

Proposal:

ERECTION OF FLOODLIGHTS ADJACENT TO EXISTING HOCKEY PITCH. THE FLOODLIGHTS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO OPERATE BETWEEN 8AM AND 10PM MONDAY TO FRIDAY, AND BETWEEN 8AM AND 9PM ON SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS AND BANK HOLIDAYS.

Drawing Nos:

RL/01; RL/02, RL/03, RL/04; RL/06 (R2); RL/07

Contact Officer:

Calum McCulloch (02082745232)

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Planning permission subject to conditions

CHECKLIST INFORMATION

Is a screening opinion required	No
Is an Environmental Statement required	No
Press notice	Yes
Site notice	Yes
Design Review Panel consulted	No
Number of neighbours consulted	101
External consultations	1
Internal consultations	4
Controlled Parking Zone	Yes - P2S

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning application has been brought before the planning committee due to the nature and number of representations received.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site comprises an existing artificial sports pitch and immediate surroundings located within the grounds of Ricards Lodge High School, Lake Road, Wimbledon.
- 2.2 The site lies within the Wimbledon North Conservation Area
- 2.3 The existing playing surface is used by school and by local clubs that hire the facility at weekends.
- 2.4 The school grounds of which the site forms part is designated open space in the Merton Core Strategy 2014.
- 2.5 To the north of the site is a locally designated Site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC) abutting Arthur Road.
- 2.6 The site is located in Flood Zone 1.
- 2.7 A locally listed 18th century tunnel is located under the grounds of Ricards Lodge High School. The old school building adjacent to the site is also locally listed. The site is also located in the Wimbledon Park House Archaeological Priority Zone.
- 2.8 The site is positioned on relatively higher ground with land sloping downwards to the south towards Wimbledon town centre. The grounds of Ricards Lodge High School are set within a residential area of detached and semi-detached dwellings. However, the site itself is set back from the surrounding residential dwellings to the north-east, east and south by intervening open space and school buildings. The nearest residential dwellings are located to the northwest and west of the site on St. Aubyn's Avenue (odd no.s 9-21) and Arthur Road (evens no.s 14-20). The land slopes up from east to west resulting in these dwellings being on slightly higher ground than the site to the east.

3. CURRENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1 It is proposed to erect floodlights around the existing artificial sports pitch on site. The floodlights would be permitted to operate between 8am and 10pm Monday to Friday, and between 8am and 9pm on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays.
- 3.2 The floodlights would enable use during the darker months by The School, Wimbledon Hockey Club and other outside groups. The pitch would be available for the School's outreach charity use from 5pm to 6pm most weekday evenings during school term time. Wimbledon Hockley Club would use the floodlit pitch from 6pm to 10pm on weeknights, and between 8am and 9pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. When Wimbledon Hockey Club do not require the pitch, it will be available for use by other hirers.

- 3.3 The proposed floodlights would comprise 8nos. of 15m high columns capable of being lowered to allow servicing of lamps at ground level. The lighting statement notes that 15m is the minimum height necessary to achieve the requirements of England Hockey and The Federation International de Hockey. Furthermore it is noted that 15m is the optimum height to avoid light spill.
- 3.4 The proposed lights will be 24no.s Philips MVO 507 Optivision luminaries with 2kW lamps. When in use the average lighting level on the playing pitch itself would be 512 lux. The lighting statement notes these lamps are “designed specifically to illuminate the playing area whilst minimising light spill into neighbouring areas and upwards from the luminaire”.

Amendments to the planning application

- 3.5 A number of amendments were made to the application since it was validated. These included the following:
- Provision of a Noise Impact Assessment
 - Updated western elevation to include acoustic barrier to mitigate noise
 - Updated Lighting Statement to include an assessment of glare as required by most recent ILP guidance.
 - Update to the Phase I Bat Survey and provision of on-site Phase II Bat Survey.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 01/P2779 - DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING PARK HOUSE MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDINGS (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SCHOOLKEEPERS HOUSE). ALTERATIONS TO THE PLAYING FIELD AREA INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF A NEW ALL WEATHER SPORTS PITCH AND TENNIS COURTS. ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO THE EXISTING BUILDINGS ON THE RICARDS LODGE SITE: A NEW TWO-STOREY TEACHING BLOCK BUILDING ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE EXISTING BUILDING; A NEW SPORTS HALL AND CHANGING ACCOMMODATION TO THE SOUTH-WEST OF THE EXISTING BUILDINGS; TWO SINGLE-STOREY EXTENSIONS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DINING - GRANT PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS - 10/06/2002
- 4.2 97/P0448 - ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY CLASSROOM BLOCK. (COUNCIL APPLICATION) – GRANT PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS - 19/06/1997
- 4.3 97/P0488 - ERECTION OF EXTERNAL LIFT SHAFT AND MOTOR ROOM TO NORTH EAST ELEVATION OF BUILDING, WITHIN INTERNAL COURTYARD. (COUNCIL APPLICATION) - GRANT PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS - 19/06/1997
- 4.4 Various Tree applications.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 **Conservation Officer:**

- 5.2 One of my concerns will light pollution caused by the height of the lights and the impact on the conservation area. I'm also aware that it is on high ground.
- 5.3 I also have concerns about damage to the underground tunnel which is locally listed. I believe that it is partly under the pitch. It is important the any excavations do not damage this historic tunnel.
- 5.4 I will add that I am concerned about light pollution affecting adjacent properties in the conservation area and possibly an impact on wildlife in particular bats.
- 5.5 The light columns are very high and may be able to be lowered to reduce the impact.
- 5.6 **Transport Officer:** Raise no objection. The proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on the adjoining highway
- 5.7 **Environment and Health Officer:** The Council's E&A Officer raised the following points:
- 5.8 Additional consideration should be given particularly when there are low ambient noise levels in an area and where there will be an increase in noise levels when a new or extended facility would be in operation, further noise increases should be avoided.
- 5.9 Perhaps the proposed facility could operate with reduced operational times.
- 5.10 Should officers be minded to approve the planning application then consideration should be given that appropriate controls are implemented and I suggest the following conditions.
- 1) The noise mitigation measures contained within the Southdowns Acoustic reports, submitted by the applicant, shall be implemented in full, used during the use of the facility and maintained or replaced with alternatives to an equal or better standard.
 - 2) A post construction completion noise monitoring assessment fully representative of the pitch use shall be undertaken with 6 weeks of first use to demonstrate that compliance that the site noise criteria has been achieved. The report shall be submitted to the LPA with 3 weeks for the assessment.
 - 3) The use of whistles shall not be permitted during practice drill/non match periods.
 - 4) A comprehensive Noise Management Plan (NMP) shall be developed to assist in minimising the potential noise impact of the use of the sports pitch. In addition to the physical mitigation measures specified with the Southdowns noise impact assessment, this shall include practical and organisational control measures and a procedure for dealing with complaints. This shall be implemented and reviewed every year.
- 5.11 **Sport England:** The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principle use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use. This being

the case Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to the application.

Council's Green spaces Officer (Ecology): I confirm that I have read the attached report (Phase II Bat Survey produce by Darwin Ecology) and consider that the survey methodology is appropriate and the conclusions and recommendations are sound.

Neighbour Consultation

5.12 Neighbours were consulted on three occasions during the application process. The application was also advertised via Conservation Area site notice. This comprised:

- A 21-day consultation was administered on 10th January 2020
- A 14-day re-consultation was administered on 9th February 2021. The consultation sought comments on amendments the application notably:
 - Provision of a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA).
 - Inclusion of an acoustic barrier on the western elevation
- A 21-day re-consultation was administered on 19th October 2021 which sought comments on:
 - Updated lighting statement and calculations
 - An addendum to a noise impact assessment
 - Phase II Bat Survey

Across the three consultation periods, the Council received:

- 60 Objections
- 7 general comments
- 45 letters of support

Consultation responses to letters sent 10th January 2020

5.13 The key points of objection raised during the first consultation period include:

- Negative impact on local wildlife, notably foxes, bats and owls.
- Negative impact on the designated green corridor
- Negative impact on the Conservation Area due to the height and light pollution emitted from the lighting columns
- Increased noise from pitch activity with associated negative impacts on character of Conservation Area and on neighbour amenity.
- Concerns the proposal would have negative impact on traffic in the area with associated impacts of noise and pollution
- Concerns the proposal would negatively impact sleep, physical and mental health of local residents.
- Concerns supporting ecological report does not consider owls as well as bats
- Concerns the floodlights are unnecessary for the school as will largely only be operational outside of school hours and would be for commercial gain.

- Concerns no consultation was done with local residents prior to the application being submitted.
- Concerns regarding intensification of the use of the site and car park resulting in noise later into the night with associated impact on the amenity of properties adjacent.
- Concerns the floodlights would have negative environmental impact in terms of increased energy usage.
- Concerns the school will have to install additional safety lights for the benefits of the car park users which would be lit up to about 10.30pm
- Concerns regarding conflict of interest relating to section 24 of the planning application form.
- The hours of use by the Wimbledon Hockey Club would outweigh the use by school significantly
- A third party ecology report was produced by Ecology Network (dated January 2021) – available [here](#). The report focuses on the November 2017 report by Darwin Ecology “Bat Lighting Assessment, Ricards Lodge High School” The report concludes the level of ‘investigation’ (relying entirely upon broad third-party records with no direct investigation whatsoever of roosts or activity), is more suited to a broad ecological scoping exercise, rather than one focussed on bats. A more appropriate survey would have included at least one of:
 - Inspection of the trees adjacent to the pitch
 - Liaison with the local community to ascertain potential roosts within nearby residences, and/or
 - Activity surveys, to gain an initial idea of level of activity and species, if not a comparative indication of activity in the vicinity of the pitch compared with that in (for example) the adjacent tree-line and/or gardens.

It is recommended that a basic activity survey is undertaken in the spring / summer to address the above.

5.14 The key points of support include:

- Benefits for people in addition to pupils of the school, including Quick Start Hockey Charity
- Improve the uptake of hockey with long term health benefits.
- Appropriate steps have been taken to minimise inconvenience to the applicant including 10pm curfew and lights-out policy of 10pm.
- There would not be a significant impact on traffic or natural environment.
- The lights would facilitate greater use of the existing facility

Consultation responses to letters sent 9th February 2020

5.15 Responses included the points raised above. In addition the following points were raised:

- The proposed acoustic barrier would not sufficiently address the impact of noise on neighbours
- Concerns that there are errors in the technical lighting information submitted.

- Concerns of discrepancy in the operational times between application form and transport statement
- A bat survey should take place in line with the recommendations of Ecology Network.
- Concerns increased use of pitch will lead to increased nuisance from users such as through littering.
- The movements in and out of the car park would increase more than thirty-two fold to more than 192,00p.a producing large amounts of CO₂ and pollutants.
- Concerns the transport statement overstates the existing use of the pitch with weekday use after 5pm rare.
- Concerns the increased traffic could lead to a further 30-40 accidents per year.
- Concerns over the methodology and analysis within the Noise Impact Assessment underestimates the impact on nearby residents
- Concerns the proposal would fail to comply with secured by design principles.
- Concerns the noise impact assessment was conducted at an atypical time.
- Concerns there is misleading claims of the existing use in the noise report.
- The lighting statement refers to out of date guidance and does not consider the impact of 'glare'.
- Concerns that noise from increases in traffic should be factored into the noise report.
- The proposal represents development creep in addition to the previous conversion of the playing field to an artificial pitch.
- The noise impact assessment does not take account of spectators who would be present at games
- Three third party reports were produced on behalf of a resident. This comprised:
 - Review of Noise Impact Assessment produced by RF Environmental (dated 23/02/21) – available [here](#). Please refer to the linked document for analysis and conclusions
 - Observations on Paul Hawkins critique produced by (Ecology Network (dated February 2021) – available [here](#)

Consultation responses to letters sent 19th October 2021

5.16 Responses included the points raised above

- Concerns increased vehicle movements is not considered in the noise assessment.
- Justification should not be based on evening use based on previous activity in 2018 and 2019 amounting to 9 evenings in total up to 8pm latest.
- There is no information on spectator attendance numbers either historically or anticipated.
- The sports pitch has recently been resurfaced with a resultant increased usage which has a negative impact on residents through increased noise.
- Concerns regarding that the proposal would breach the post-curfew limit will be 500cd as set by ILP.

- Three third party reports were produced on behalf of a resident this comprised:
 - Bat Activity Survey produced by Ecology Network (dated October 2021) – available [here](#)
 - Review of Darwin Ecology (August 2021) report Phase 2 Report and Mitigation Plan produced by Ecology Network – available [here](#)
 - Review Southdowns Environmental Consultants' Noise Impact Assessment produced by RF Environmental (dated November 2021)– available [here](#)
- The Wimbledon Society noted the following:
 - The acoustic barrier is not clearly shown on the site plan or elevation
 - No provision has been made to accommodate changing rooms or loos for visitors.
 - The hours of operations should be restricted to 9pm and not 10pm to ensure local residential amenities are respected.
 - Toilet facilities should be available at all times, and no play permitted unless they are operational
 - The acoustic fencing should be in place before play is permitted
 - If the low light spill luminaires are changed from the approved model, no illumination should be permitted until the replacement has been first agreed by the Council.
 - An Archaeological Protection Condition should be in place.

6. POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- Chapter 4 Decision-making
- Chapter 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Chapter 11 Making effective use of land
- Chapter 12 Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Chapter 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

London Plan 2021

- D1 London's form, character and capacity for growth
- D4 Delivering good design
- D14 Noise
- HC1 Heritage conservation and growth
- S1 Developing London's social infrastructure
- S2 Health and social care facilities
- S5 sports and recreation facilities
- G1 Green Infrastructure
- G6 Biodiversity and access to nature
- G7 Trees and woodlands
- T3 Transport capacity, connectivity and safeguarding
- T4 Assessing and mitigating transport impacts

- T6 Car parking

Merton Core Strategy 2011

- Policy CS 8 Housing Choice
- Policy CS 9 Housing provision
- Policy CS 13 Open space, nature conservation, leisure and culture
- Policy CS 14 Design
- Policy CS 15 Climate Change
- Policy CS 20 Parking, Servicing and Delivery

Merton Sites and Policies Plan 2014

- DM O2 Nature Conservation, Trees, hedges and landscape features
- DM D1 Urban design and the public realm
- DM D2 Design considerations in all developments
- DM D4 Managing heritage assets
- DM T2 Transport impacts of development
- DM T3 Car parking and servicing standards
- DM C1 Community facilities
- DM C2 Education for children and young people

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The planning considerations for the proposed development relate to the following:

- Principle of development
- Visual amenity, heritage and impact on the Wimbledon North Conservation Area
- Neighbour Amenity
- Biodiversity
- Transport and parking

Principle of development

7.2 Development Plan policy generally supports development which enhances sports facilities for the benefit of health and wellbeing. The relevant policies are considered in detail below:

7.3 The NPPF 2021 is of relevance with regards to: Section 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities) paragraph 93 supports the provision of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs. Paragraph 93 part a) specifically supports planning “positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments”.

7.4 Section 11 (Making effective use of Land) paragraph 123 supports developments to make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the

quality of service provision and access to open space.

- 7.5 London Plan (2021) S2 (Health and social care facilities) which supports Boroughs to work with community organisations to develop proposals that support the provision of high-quality new and enhanced health and social care facilities to meet identified need.
- 7.6 London Plan (2021) Policy S5 (Sports and recreation facilities) supports development that ensures there is sufficient supply of good quality sports and recreation facilities. The policy notes that development proposals for sports facilities should maximise the multiple use of facilities, and encourage the co-location of services between sports providers, schools, colleges, universities and other community facilities; and support the provision of sports lighting within reasonable hours, where there is an identified need for sports facilities, and lighting is required to increase their potential usage, unless the lighting gives rise to demonstrable harm to the local community or biodiversity.
- 7.7 Merton Core Strategy (2011) Policy CS13 supports development that based on assessment of need and capacity, enhances opportunities in sport by refurbishing sport facilities in Merton's open spaces; and Promoting healthy lifestyles to encourage physical education and well-being through the use of schools, open spaces and playing pitches.
- 7.8 Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014) Policy DM C1 (Community Facilities) supports enhancing community facilities provided they are appropriately located without harmful impact in terms of neighbour amenity, parking and transport.
- 7.9 Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014) Policy DM C2 (Education for young people) refers to education and states "development proposals for new schools and/or improved education facilities for children (≥ 5) and young people will be supported, particularly where new facilities are required to provide additional school places in an area to meet an identified shortfall in supply".
- 7.10 In addition to the above policies, [the Merton Playing Pitch Strategy 2019](#) is also relevant indicating that
- 78% of all demand in Merton is produced by Wimbledon HC.
 - The consultation with England Hockey indicates that even with the additional pitch at Raynes Park High School, the increase in demand for hockey from Merton clubs and those based in neighbouring boroughs has been so rapid, there is not considered to be sufficient supply to meet projected future demand.
 - There is increasing demand by clubs for hockey and there is an estimated 8.5 hours of further demand that would ideally be played in Merton.
 - The report makes a recommendation to encourage educational establishments that provide playing pitches for use by local community teams, through artificial provision, to secure formal community use of pitches and ancillary facilities through a Community Use Agreement (CUA). Furthermore the proposed enhancements to the hockey pitch (resurfacing and new floodlights) are included in the Strategy's Action Plan.
- 7.11 In light of the above, Officers consider the principle of enhancing the hockey

pitch with provision of floodlights to expand its use to be acceptable. The proposal accords with policies that support enhanced sports and health facilities. The floodlights would have both educational and health benefits by providing an enhanced facility for the School and Wimbledon Hockey Club (WHC). The applicant's planning statement notes that there is currently a waiting list of circa 200 juniors hoping to join the club. The extended hours used by WHC will enable more children to join the club from the local area.

7.12 However, in addition to the above the proposal must be assessed against the below planning considerations:

Visual amenity, heritage and impact on the Wimbledon North Conservation Area

7.13 London Plan policies D1, D4 and HC1, Core Strategy policy CS14 and SPP Policies DMD2 and DMD4 require proposals to preserve or enhance heritage assets, including Conservation Areas and Listed assets.

7.14 The floodlights would have an impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by increasing the amount of light and installing noticeably taller structures which are uncommon in the surrounding area. However, the lux plan provided indicates light spill would fall off significantly away from the playing pitch area. In addition, the lights are positioned as such that they would not be significantly visible from nearby street scenes due to the playing pitch immediate surroundings to the north-east, east and south by intervening open space and school buildings. The existing playing pitch is sited well within the school grounds, away from public roads. Therefore, this impact is not considered to be significant. The rear elevations of the nearest residential properties, located to the west, are at least 40m from the hockey pitch. Whilst the floodlights when in use would generate light and illuminate the hockey pitch, owing to the position of the pitch being well within the school grounds, officers do not consider at the illumination would cause harm and would be viewed from significant distances from outside the school grounds. On balance therefore, officers do not consider the proposal would cause harm to the character of the Conservation Area and there would be no harm to its significance.

7.15 A locally listed 18th century tunnel is located under the grounds of Ricards Lodge High School. Plan RL/05 demonstrates the tunnel is located some 20m away from the base of nearest floodlight. As such this feature would not be harmed by the proposed development. Further, the proposed lights would be sited well away from the locally listed building in the school grounds.

7.16 The proposal is located within the Wimbledon Park House Archaeological Priority Zone. Officers do not consider there to be enough ground disturbance that would warrant archaeological investigation.

7.17 The Council's Conservation Officer (CO) was consulted for this application. The CO expressed the following concerns:

- Impact of light pollution on the character of the Conservation Area
- Impact of tall structures on the character of the Conservation Area. The area is on high ground.
- Impact of excavations on locally listed tunnel.

- Impact of light light pollution affecting adjacent properties in the Conservation Area and possibly an impact on wildlife in particular bats.

7.18 Officers acknowledge the Conservation Officers concerns above, however, for the reasons stated in the preceding paragraphs, Officers consider the floodlights would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would not harm the locally listed tunnel or locally listed school building. Therefore, the proposal would comply with the relevant policies in respect of heritage and conservation area impacts.

Neighbour Amenity

7.19 Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014) Policy DM D2 seeks to ensure that the potential impact of new development has regard for neighbour amenity. London Plan (2021) Policy D14 (Noise) and DM EP2 (Reducing and mitigating noise) requires development to reduce, manage and mitigate noise to protect local amenity.

7.20 In this instance, the nearest residential properties most likely to be impacted are those located to west and north-west on St. Aubyn's Avenue (odd Nos. 9-21) and Arthur Road (evens nos. 14-20). The rear boundaries of the properties on St Aubyn's Avenue and Arthur Road benefit from some vegetation that forms a natural barrier between the site and these properties, however some of this vegetation is deciduous thereby offering limited screening in winter when the proposed floodlights would be in use most.

Impact of lighting

7.21 There would be some effect on outlook for the properties located to the west and north-west noted above due to the relative proximity of the floodlights.

7.22 A Lighting Statement has been submitted by the applicant which is supported by relevant calculations and light spill plans. Vertical illumination to the houses to the west of the pitch at heights of 2m and 4m are shown in drawings RL/02 and RL/03 respectively. These plans generally show the amount of vertical illuminance falls off significantly as one moves away from the hockey pitch. There would be some minor horizontal light spill into the rear of nos. 14, 16 and 20 Arthur Road and nos. 19, 21, and 23 St. Aubyn's Avenue. However, the plans demonstrate the proposals would result in a maximum vertical illuminance of 1 lux on properties. This is compliant with the most recent relevant guidance from the Institute for Lighting Professionals guidance (ILP GN01/2021) gives a maximum vertical illuminance on properties of 5 lx pre-curfew.

7.23 There would also be some noticeable visible glare from these properties (otherwise called maximum luminous intensity). However the Lighting Statement notes this would not exceed 5789cd which is compliant with the relevant guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals which gives a maximum pre-curfew limit of 7500 lux.

7.24 Whilst there would be an impact on properties to the west, the impact is not considered harmful in planning terms. This is because the rear elevations of the properties to the west of the site would be roughly 40m away from hockey pitch providing a significant degree of separation. The proposed lighting would

comply with most recent guidance the Institute of Lighting Professionals. Further, the curfew of 10pm on weeknights and 9pm on all other days secured by condition would prevent intrusive light pollution during antisocial hours.

Noise Impact

7.25 There are no development plan policies which set specific restrictions on noise levels. However, there is related guidance which help inform Officers' assessment of noise. In this instance the relevant guidance comprises:

- The guidance document Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Acoustics – Planning Implications, published by Sport England in 2015
- The Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) document Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment, published in 2014

7.26 The applicant has submitted a [noise impact assessment](#) produced by Southdowns Environmental Consultants Ltd. The noise report involved assessing the impact of noise on the nearest residential properties, notably:

- 13 St Aubyn's Avenue
- 23 St Aubyn's Avenue
- 20 Arthur Road
- The Well House
- 5 Curie Hill Close

7.27 The assessment involved undertaking two key tests:

- **Test 1:** An assessment of absolute noise levels from the Sports Pitch using the criteria of the Sport England's Guidance on Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Acoustics; and
- **Test 2:** An assessment of the change in ambient (LAeq,T) noise levels using the semantic descriptors of the IEMA Guidelines for Environmental Noise Assessment (outlined in Section 2.5)

7.28 The key findings from the noise survey include:

- The noise assessment found the main sources of noise associated with the sports pitch usage include human voice (adults and juniors), whistles and hockey balls coming into contact with perimeter boards. The residual noise climate in the vicinity of Ricards Lodge School is comprised of road traffic, birdsong, pedestrians, trains and aircraft.
- Noise levels from the Sports Pitch have been calculated to be up to 53 dB LAeq,1hr in the garden of the closest residential receptor, R2 – 23 St Aubyn's Avenue, which exceeds the guideline design criterion of 50 dB LAeq,1hr recommended in Sport England's Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Acoustics guidance.
- The contribution of the Sports Pitch noise to the overall ambient noise levels at receptors during the assessment period of 16:00 hrs to 22:00 hrs would result in a change in ambient noise levels of up to +6.6 dB LAeq,1hr in the garden of R2 – 23 St Aubyn's Avenue. Based on The IEMA's guideline criteria detailed within the Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment, this change would indicate a substantial impact at this receptor. At other receptor locations in the vicinity of Ricards Lodge School

the magnitude of the predicted impact is less, ranging from 'none / not significant' to 'moderate'.

- Noise mitigation is proposed in the form of a 2.8m high acoustic barrier along the south-western side of the Sports Pitch. The results of preliminary acoustic modelling of this barrier show that using this mitigation measure noise levels of the Sports Pitch could be reduced to 47 dB LAeq,1hr or lower at the residential receptor locations, achieving the Sport England design criterion. Furthermore, the predicted magnitude of impact at residential receptors would be limited to no greater than 'slight'.

7.29 A further [addendum](#) was submitted by South Downs Environmental Consultants upon request of the Council. The addendum provided:

- assessment of the change in ambient noise level (LAeq,1hr) at the receptors in each hourly period between 16:00 hrs and 22:00 hrs due to the contribution of the sports pitch;
- presentation of the effect outcome based on all receptors being classed as sensitive;
- further information on the frequency of occurrence of maximum (LAmax) noise levels and how sources associated with these will be managed; and the development of a Noise Management Plan (NMP) as a further noise mitigation measure.

7.30 The key findings from the addendum included:

- The calculated noise level of the sports pitch including the effect of the proposed noise barrier has been compared against the existing noise levels to determine the predicted change in ambient noise levels (LAeq,1hr) at residential receptors in the vicinity of the facility. According to the effect descriptors of the IEMA Guidelines an insignificant impact is indicated by the assessment at all receptors during the hourly periods between 16:00 hrs and 18:00 hrs.
- A moderate impact is indicated by the assessment at R2 – 23 St Aubyn's Close during the hourly periods between 18:00 hrs and 21:00 hrs. However, this effect outcome is based on the receptor being classed as sensitive. The consultants infer that, due to the existing seasonal use of the sports pitch during the evening, it may mean the receptor has a lower sensitivity to noise in which case the effect outcome would be a slight effect according to the IEMA guideline effect descriptors.
- With mitigation, the calculated noise level of the sports pitch at all receptors would be lower than the 50 dB LAeq,1hr guideline limit of the Sport England guidance on Artificial Grass Pitch acoustics which is intended to avoid moderate annoyance in the daytime and evenings.
- Appendix A of the addendum includes a noise management plan (NMP) as suggested by Merton Council Environmental Health Officer. The NMP details physical and practical measures to control noise from the sports pitch.

7.31 The submitted noise reports demonstrate:

- With the acoustic barrier put in place, the calculated noise level of the sports pitch at all receptors would be lower than the 1db of the 50 dB LAeq,1hr

guideline limit of the Sport England guidance on Artificial Grass Pitch acoustics.

- With the acoustic barrier put in place, there would be a 'moderate' impact at 23 St Aubyn's Close during the hourly periods between 18:00 hrs and 21:00 hrs in respect of the IEMA Guidelines for Environmental Noise. However this is based on the surrounding residential properties being classed as sensitive. Taking into account an existing level of noise, no. 23 may have a lower sensitivity to noise in which case the effect outcome would be a slight effect according to the IEMA guideline effect descriptors.

7.32 Case officers are mindful that the levels of noise from the Hockey pitch that would be generated after dark would be similar to that already permitted during daylight hours. The curfew of 10pm on weeknights and 9pm on all other days would prevent adverse impacts occurring during more anti-social hours. A number of conditions are also recommended by the Council's Environmental Health Officer to limit the amount of noise.

7.33 This includes:

- Physical mitigation measures specified in the noise report are delivered.
- A post construction completion noise monitoring assessment to demonstrate that compliance that the site noise criteria has been achieved
- A comprehensive Noise Management Plan (NMP) shall be developed to assist in minimising the potential noise impact of the use of the sports pitch
- Prohibition of whistles during non-match periods

7.34 The above conditions would be added to any recommendation for approval, with the exception of prohibition of whistles. Use of whistles is an inherent part of hockey play (whether in game play or training) and it would not be practical to enforce this condition. This condition would therefore not be put forward by officers.

7.35 Case Officers note there have been concerns from residents over the potential increase in noise from the car park located to the north-east of the site. Case Officers do not consider the likely noise generated from the car park harmful to the amenity of nearby residents, notably 55 – 59 (odds) Leopold Road. The levels of noise from the car park that would be generated after dark would be similar to that already permitted during daylight hours. Notwithstanding, Officers have requested a noise management plan which would detail measures to reduce noise in the car park. This for example, could comprise, asking users of the pitch not let engines idle and avoid loud conversations in the car park.

7.36 Officers note residents' concerns regarding the methodology adopted for the noise impact assessment. Notably, a third party review of the applicant's noise impact assessment addendum takes issue with the method of deriving the existing baseline sound levels in 1 hour periods between 16:00 and 22:00 hrs. Second, the impact noise from referee's whistles, ball strikes and shouting will occur on a frequent basis and are expected to be noticeable and intrusive. Officers acknowledge that there are other methods of deriving a representative baseline level from a series of data, but there is no standardised assessment procedure for assessing sports pitch noise and no single agreed method. With regard to the noise from referee's whistles, ball strikes and shouting, officers are mindful that these noises already form part of the existing permitted noise

climate and the implementation of a noise management plan will aide in mitigating this impact.

7.37 Overall, Officers consider that the proposed development would not generate noise to such a level that would give rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life of nearby residents. The existing use of the pitch would remain (Hockey pitch) and officers are satisfied that the use of the pitch for its hockey use into evening hours would be acceptable.

7.38 For the reasons given above, the proposed development is not considered to harm the amenity of surrounding residents from light pollution or noise and would therefore comply with Merton Sites and Policies Plan (2014) Policy DM D2 and DM EP2 (Reducing and mitigating noise), and London Plan (2021) Policy D14.

Biodiversity

7.39 London Plan (2021) Policy G6, Merton Core Strategy Policy CS1 and SPP Policy DMO2 require development proposals to conserve and enhance biodiversity, particularly areas which are designated such as site of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs). A SINC is located to the north of the site abutting Arthur Road. Furthermore, trees are located to the west of the site at the rear of neighbouring residential plots.

7.40 Darwin Ecology provided a Bat Lighting Assessment in 2017. This report identified that the boundary features around the site provided foraging and commuting habitat for bats. Subsequently, a Phase II Bat Survey was conducted to investigate the presence of bats.

7.41 The Phase II bat survey notes the following findings:

- The survey work to date has confirmed that the site supports foraging and commuting common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule and serotine bats. Common pipistrelle bats were recorded more frequently at the site with noctule and serotine only recorded with a single pass each.
- The western boundary hedgerow along with the northern boundary provides the key foraging areas for the species identified at the site. Only light tolerant species have been recorded, likely due to the light in the immediate area from residential dwellings and lighting from the school to the east and south of the site.
- Overall, the survey has confirmed low bat activity on site with the site being confirmed to be of local, parish or district value for bats.
- Assuming a 10pm turnoff time of the floodlights, the proposal has the potential to impact bats between the start of March to mid-November when bat emergence times will coincide with the floodlighting being on. However, these impacts are considered likely to be small scale and highly localised and will not result in a population level impact as a result of the lighting
- The species identified using the site are light tolerant, however the lighting will increase chances of predation on the site.
- The low level additional lighting on the circa. 100m of one side of tree line habitat, is not anticipated to impart bats ability to roost, feed or reproduce,

and will therefore not constitute a significant disturbance of the local bat population

- 7.42 Officers have consulted a certified ecologist from within the Council's Green Spaces Team who considers the bat survey methodology carried out by Darwin Ecology was appropriate and the conclusions and recommendations are sound.
- 7.43 Officers note a number of third party reports have been submitted by a local resident in relation to bats. Most relevant are the documents entitled 'Bat activity survey' (October 2021) and Review of Darwin Ecology report of Phase 2 Report and Mitigation Plan (November 2021) written by Ecology Network.
- 7.44 The 'Bat Activity Survey' comprised a single dusk survey adjacent to the western boundary of the site. The third party survey identified activity of common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and noctules. The report concludes that further surveys are needed to reveal the full extent to which bats are reliant upon the vegetated boundary, and that the proposal should not be implemented unless it can be clearly demonstrated that any adverse impact upon the conservation status of bats may be mitigated.
- 7.45 The Review of Darwin Ecology report of Phase 2 Report and Mitigation Plan. The report raises the following points:
- The degree of bat activity noted within the report does not appear to be fully reflected within the conclusions drawn.
 - Insufficient attention was given to establishing the presence, or otherwise, of roosts at the western boundary. It is recommended that further survey is focussed upon (a) establishing presence or likely absence of roosts along the western boundary and (b) establishing the presence or likely absence of additional species during the latter part of the survey window.
 - The above information will be an important consideration in ensuring that the proposed scheme is legislatively compliant.
- 7.46 Officers have sought a response from the applicant's ecologists in response to the points raised by Ecology Network. Officers have reviewed this response and are satisfied with the clarifications and justifications made by Darwin Ecology which combined with the prior response from a Council Ecologist indicate the findings of the applicant's phase II bat survey are suitably robust. Case Officers do not consider further survey work proportionate as surveys at Ricards Lodge were conducted in peak times maternity months for the most bat species group, such as pipistrelles and Myotis sp., (May-July), in order to establish if any high level roosts could be detected nearby. It's also notable that the bats recorded in the third party bat survey do not include any species which were not identified in the applicant's bat survey which are considered by Darwin Ecology to be light tolerant.
- 7.47 NPPF paragraph 180 notes that planning permission should be refused if *significant* harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided. Based on the evidence submitted by the applicant and the third party bat survey, officers do not consider there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the threshold for significant harm is met. There is unlikely to be unacceptable impact on bats or other statutory protected species resulting from the proposal. Consequently, the development is considered compliant with NPPF paragraph 180, London

Plan (2021) Policy G6, Merton Core Strategy Policy CS1 and SPP Policy DMO2.

Transport and parking

- 7.48 London Plan Policy T4, Adopted Merton Core Planning Strategy (2011) CS20 (Parking, Servicing and Delivery), Sites and Policies Plan (2014) DM T2 (Transport Impacts of Developments), DM T3 (Car Parking and Servicing Standards) 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.
- 7.49 There would be no change to the parking arrangements as a result of the floodlights being installed. Users of the hockey pitch currently utilise the existing school car park during the year during daylight hours. The car park would simply be used later on into the evening when days are shorter. The Council's Transport Planner has reviewed the application and does not consider the proposal would harm the local highway network. Accordingly the proposed development is considered acceptable in respect of transport and parking.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The principle for the proposed development is considered acceptable by officers. Installing floodlights would enhance the quality and make more effective use of the designated open space allowing for extended use to meet the demands of the school and Wimbledon Hockey Club. The positioning of the floodlights are such that they would not harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would not harm the locally listed tunnel or locally listed school building. Officers acknowledge there would be some impact on neighbouring properties as a result via an extended period of noise and light emitted from the floodlights and use of the hockey pitch. However, the impact is not considered harmful taking into consideration the existing permitted use for sports during daylight hours, measures to avoid light spill, noise mitigation and the imposed cut off time of 10pm and 9pm on weekdays and weekends respectively. The applicant has submitted sufficient evidence that there would be no significant harm to bats and therefore the proposal is considered compliant with biodiversity policy. The existing parking facilities are considered acceptable for the proposed development and there would be no harm to the highway network. In light of the above it is recommended to grant planning permission subject to conditions.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Grant planning permission subject to conditions:

Conditions

1. **A1 Commencement** of development (full application)

2. **A7 Approved Plans:** The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: **RL/01; RL/02, RL/03, RL/04; RL/06 (R2); RL/07**

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. **D11 Construction Times:** No demolition or construction work or ancillary activities such as deliveries shall take place before 8am or after 6pm Mondays - Fridays inclusive, before 8am or after 1pm on Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties and ensure compliance with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policy D14 of the London Plan 2021 and policy DM EP2 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

4. **Hours of Use:** The development hereby permitted shall only be used between the hours of 8am and 10pm Monday to Friday, and between 8am and 9pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenities of local residents and ensure compliance with policy DM D2 and DM EP2 of Merton Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014)

5. **Light levels:** The light Lux levels of the floodlights shall not exceed those set out on drawing RL01, RL02 and RL03.

Reason: To protect the amenities of local residents and ensure compliance with policy DM D2 and DM EP2 of Merton Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014)

6. The noise mitigation measures contained within the Southdowns Acoustic reports, submitted by the applicant, shall be implemented in full, used during the use of the facility and maintained or replaced with alternatives to an equal or better standard.

Reason: To protect the amenities of local residents and ensure compliance with policy DM D2 and DM EP2 of Merton Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014)

7. A post construction completion noise monitoring assessment fully representative of the pitch use shall be undertaken within 6 weeks of first use to demonstrate compliance that the site noise criteria has been achieved. The assessment report shall be submitted to the LPA within 3 weeks of it being carried out.

Reason: To protect the amenities of local residents and ensure compliance with policy DM D2 and DM EP2 of Merton Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014)

8. No development shall take place until a comprehensive Noise Management Plan (NMP) has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The NMP shall be developed to assist in minimising the potential noise impact of the use of the sports pitch. In addition to the physical mitigation measures specified with the Southdowns noise impact assessment, this shall include practical and

organisational control measures and a procedure for dealing with complaints. The noise NMP shall be implemented and reviewed every year.

Reason: To protect the amenities of local residents and ensure compliance with policy DM D2 and DM EP2 of Merton Sites and Policies Plan (July 2014)