

WINDSOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PANEL

28 October 2009

Item: 9

Application No.:	09/01818/FULL
Location:	Charters School Charters Road Sunningdale Ascot SL5 9QY
Proposal:	Construction of a synthetic grass sports pitch with perimeter fencing, floodlighting, access and ancillary works
Applicant:	Royal Borough Of Windsor And Maidenhead
Agent:	Not Applicable
Parish/Ward:	Sunningdale Parish

If you have a question about this report, please contact: Sarah Ellison on 01628 796070 or at sarah.ellison@rbwm.gov.uk

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application seeks planning permission to erect an all weather sports pitch, surrounded by fencing to 3 metres in height and with 6 surrounding floodlights to 11.35 metres in height. The proposal is considered to represent appropriate development in the Green Belt and which would not significantly harm the openness or the character of this part of the Green Belt. The development would not appear as uncharacteristic to the appearance of the wider sports field. The floodlights are acceptable but only subject to conditions controlling their hours of use and lux levels (the lux levels have been reduced from 306lux as originally proposed to 200lux which is more appropriate for the type of use proposed). The development is not considered to adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring residents or highway safety in Charters Road.

It is recommended the Panel grants planning permission with the conditions listed in Section 10 of this report.

2. REASON FOR PANEL DETERMINATION

- The Council's Constitution does not give the Head of Planning & Development delegated powers to determine the application in the way recommended; such decisions can only be made by the Panel.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The application site comprises part of the playing fields of Charters School and the site is fairly level. To the south of the site is a new car park for the school that has recently been constructed. Further to the east is Walters Cottage and to the west the access road to the new Charters residential development (which is to the north of the site separated by trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders and a field).

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL AND ANY RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 The application seeks planning permission to construct a synthetic grass sport pitch with perimeter fencing to 3 metres in height, 6 surrounding flood lights to 11.35 metres in height, access and ancillary works. During the application the size of the pitch has been increased from 40m x 60m to 42.9m x 60.9m to comply with the necessary standard, although amended plans showing this are awaited at the time of writing this report. The lux level of the flood lights has also reduced from an average of 306 lux to 200lux, provided by 6 x 10m high masts.

5 MAIN RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

Local Area Agreement

- 5.1 The recommendation would contribute to the achievement of these selected priorities of the Council and its partners:

Improve life chances for all children and young people	✓
Promote healthy lifestyles	✓

Royal Borough Local Plan

- 5.2 The main strategic planning considerations applying to the site and the associated policies are:

	Pollution	Green Belt
	✓	✓
Local Plan	NAP3	GB1, GB2

6. EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The key issues for consideration are:

- i whether the proposal amounts to appropriate development in the Green Belt, and if not whether there are any very special circumstances that would clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by reason of its inappropriateness and any other harm caused by the proposal;
- ii the impact upon amenities of neighbouring residents; and
- iii the adequacy of car parking and the impact on highway safety in the area.

Appropriateness of the development in the Green Belt and the impact upon the purposes of including land within the Green Belt

- 6.2 The site is located within the Green Belt. Saved Policy GB1 of the Local Plan sets out when development within the Green Belt is considered to be appropriate. The policy sets out that essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation is acceptable development within the Green Belt. Policy GB2 advises that development should not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt or the proposes of including land in it than the existing development. Development should also not harm the character of the countryside because of its scale, siting or design, a material increase in the level of activity on the site, a material increase in the scale of developmental, a permanent loss of grade 1, 2 or 3 A agricultural land, or cause harm to residential amenities.
- 6.3 The site is already in use for outdoor sport and recreation. It is used as playing fields for Charters School. The area for the pitch has been identified as the most suitable location for a sports pitch and is the current location of a natural turf training pitch. Converting it to a synthetic pitch will enable it to be available all year round for the school, and also for users of the leisure centre that is also located at Charters School. The fence is a standard feature of all-weather pitches, providing an element of security from access, the general transfer of mud and general soiling, and providing a controlled area. The proposed flood lighting would be provided using 6 x 11.35m high lighting poles, providing a lighting level of 200lux, which is the standard acceptable for football pitches. In order to protect the character of the area it is considered necessary to condition the lights to only be lit when the pitch is in use, and to be turned off no later than 10.00pm.
- 6.4 The pitch would be seen in the context of the use of the site for outdoor sport and recreation where the synthetic pitch would perhaps not be an unusual occurrence. It is set well back from the road, with the car park in between and would not be prominent in the locality.

- 6.5 It is considered that the proposed pitch and lighting represents appropriate development in the Green Belt and in compliance with Policies GB1 and GB2 of the Local Plan.

Impact upon amenities of nearby residents

- 6.6 The closest residential properties are Walters Cottage, some 150m from the closest part of the new pitch. The boundary of this property is around 110m from the closest part of the pitch, and the school bungalow around 80m from the pitch. The lighting levels at 200lux, the standard level for such facilities, and there would be limited overspill lighting with the lighting concentrated on the pitch as you would expect. It is considered appropriate to condition the lights so that they are only switched on when the pitch is in use, and turned off no later than 10.00pm. The new pitch itself is essentially formalising an existing facility and the use of the lights can be controlled to ensure they have a satisfactory impact on nearby residents. For this reason no objections are raised to the proposal in this respect.

Car parking and highway safety

- 6.7 It has been clarified that the existing parking within the school site, rather than the new adjacent car park off Charters Road would be used in connection with this facility, when the facility is used outside school hours, there is ample parking within the school grounds to cater for the traffic generated by this pitch. It is proposed to use parking within the school as there is a planning condition limiting the use of this new car park to the school and school functions. As most of the trips generated by this facility would be outside peak hours there is considered to be no adverse effects upon highway safety.

Other Material Considerations

- 6.8 Due to the location of the site within in an area of archaeological potential it is considered that a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief is necessary.
- 6.9 The comments that have been relating to the impact on Charters, a Listed Building, are noted. This building is around 200m from the application site, separated by trees and a field, and at the time of visiting the site could not be seen from the site. It is considered that there would be little, if any impact upon the setting of the Listed Building.

7. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

Comments from interested parties

42 occupiers were notified directly of the application.

The Case Officer posted a statutory notice advertising the application at the site on 11th September 2009.

7 letters were received objecting to the application, summarised as:

Comment		Where in the report this is considered
1.	Inappropriate in the Green Belt	Paragraphs 6.2 – 6.4
2.	Adversely affect wild life	Noted
3.	The use will exacerbate a situation that already causes a near unbearable noise and disturbance to local residents	Noted
4.	The lights will be intrusive and adversely affect Green Belt	Paragraph 6.5
5.	There will be an increase in traffic adversely affecting road safety	Paragraph 6.6
6.	Harm visual amenity of the area	Paragraph 6.4
7.	Not enough car parking	Paragraph 6.7
8.	Adversely affect the setting of Charters, a listed building.	Paragraph 6.96

9.	The lights on the tennis court already constitute an intrusion	Noted
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Other consultees and organisations

Consultee	Comment	Where in the report this is considered
Sport England	Object unless the pitch is increased to 60.9m x 42.6m	Paragraph 4.1
Berkshire Archaeology	No objections, subject to condition.	Paragraph 6.8
RBWM Lighting Engineer	A lighting level of 150 – 180lux as opposed to 300 lux would be more appropriate	Noted
RBWM Highways DC	No objections	Paragraph 6.7

9. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

- Appendix A - Site location plan

10. CONDITIONS RECOMMENDED FOR INCLUSION IF PERMISSION IS GRANTED

1 The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2 Irrespective of the details shown on the submitted plans the average lux level of the football pitch shall not exceed 200lux and the lights shall only be switched on when the pitch is in use and in any event at no time shall they be switched on between the hours of 2200 hours and dawn on the following day.

Reason: In the interests of the character of the area and the amenity of neighbouring residents.

3 No development shall take place within the area of archaeological interest until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation in situ or by record of any finds made in this area of archaeological interest. Relevant Policies - Local Plan ARCH2, ARCH4.

4 No development shall take place until samples and/or a specification of all the finishing materials to be used in any hard surfacing on the application site, the fencing and the floodlighting have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken and thereafter maintained in accordance with the approved samples/ and/or specification.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Relevant Policies - Local Plan DG1.