

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	ITEM NO.
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL	
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 13th January 2021	

Ward: Thames

App No.: 192049/FUL

Address: Queen Annes School, Henley Road, Caversham, Reading

Proposal: Development of a new artificial pitch, fencing, floodlights and acoustic fence. Erection of a pavilion and changing rooms. Floodlighting of Tennis Courts. Erection of an Indoor Tennis building. Consolidation to remove dip in the natural grass playing fields.

Applicant: Queen Anne's School

Determination Date: Originally 06/4/2020; EOT to be agreed.

RECOMMENDATION:

As per the main Agenda report

1. Corrections/Clarifications

- 1.1 At paragraph 6.7 of the main agenda report it is stated that one grass pitch will be lost. To confirm, and in overall terms, there will be no loss of grass pitch. The infilling of the dip in the playing fields at the western end of the site will allow for these fields to be used wherein they currently cannot be used as pitches. This has also been confirmed in paragraph 6.24 of the main agenda report.
- 1.2 At paragraph 6.8 of the main agenda report it should be noted that the pavilion would sit on a tennis court and not on existing grass playing field.
- 1.3 The above clarifications do not materially change the assessment of the scheme made as discussed within the main committee report.

2. Written Statements

- 2.1 Since the publication of the committee agenda, 13 written statements have been submitted. 12 of these statements are in lieu of speaking at committee, with 1 in addition to speaking at committee. These are included in the appendices below.
- 2.2 Where the additional statements are objecting, they reiterate concerns raised in their original objections which have been summarised and addressed in the main officer's report.
- 2.3 To clarify, the Council's specialist consultee officers have undertaken a detailed assessment of the information submitted with the application and revised during the course of the application.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The officer recommendation remains to grant planning permission subject to the conditions and informatives as outlined in the main report.

Appendix 1 - Written Statement from Jon Lloyd

I am submitting a written statement further to the Committee Report for Application 192049 as, contrary to the officer's comment in para 4.12, residents were not reconsulted on the revised plans.

Para 6.46 of the report states: 'The Applicant has indicated there will be no external usage on a Sunday for either the AGP or the tennis courts.' However, the timetable on pp. 21–22 states facilities will not be available for outside hire on Saturday or Sunday. These details don't tally – thus, we require confirmation there will be no usage of school facilities at weekends other than by its pupils.

Living alongside a school, we appreciate there will be some noise during school hours in ~~termtime~~, but reasonably do not expect noise during school holidays. However, currently the report contains no discussion of usage of facilities during school holidays, which account for 18 weeks a year. This needs to be clarified and, given that this is a school rather than a commercial sports facility, this usage must adhere to the school timetable and not be permitted during holidays.

I am very concerned that while the hours of operation of the tennis courts have been revised, no concessions have been made re the AGP hours. We have young children whose bedrooms overlook the school grounds (as do many of our neighbours) who go to bed long before the proposed 9pm weekday cut-off time. In spring and summer, we will need to open windows, which will allow more noise in. Thus, my children's quality of life and wellbeing is likely to be adversely impacted by the use of these pitches up to 9pm potentially every weeknight. For the same reason, our quiet enjoyment of our gardens and rooms at the back of our houses in the evening is also under severe threat.

It cannot be guaranteed at this stage that the acoustic fence will be sufficient in reducing the extra noise generated by users of the AGP and the other newly created pitches, so I propose that for an initial period of at least a year, the use of these stops at 7.45pm. This would not affect pupils' usage, would still allow outside usage after school on weekdays and would allow more accurate assessments of the level of noise/disturbance generated during the different seasons to be undertaken.

If it transpires that residents are not adversely affected, this could be reviewed. However, at present it seems extremely speculative to assume a 9pm cut-off is reasonable when usage will occur so close to residential properties and the number of pitches is being increased too.

If approved in its current form, the application amounts to a complete change in usage of the school site, with significant potential adverse repercussions on our residential amenity and quiet enjoyment of properties. I cannot stress enough how worried we are about the likely repercussions of this proposed development on our lives and urge that more safeguards and consideration are shown to residents than is done in the proposal.

Appendix 2 - Written Statement from Rob Halpin

Written statement on Application 192049 from 22 Field View.

I am submitting a further written statement as the Committee Report for Application 192049 contains further details that either require clarification, appear to have missed out on parts of the development that are material to the environmental impact of the proposed development.

On reading the council report and implication that the proposal will be approved, some of the points from my detailed objection submitted through Cllr Darnell have not been addressed so I am reiterating some and due to the requirement for brevity here, request that my objection be re-read for more detail.

Section 4.12 states that all neighbours were re-consulted on the changes in the plans. Please provide evidence to the committee of this as at no point were we re-contacted by the school nor the council until w/c January 4th 2021. This timing giving us mere days to consider a proposed development which has a high probability to have a material negative impact on our quality of life. We were only made aware of changes in the original proposals midway through 2020 due to social media and local media interest in the extent of the development, at no point were formal consultations attempted.

The report still appears to ignore the fact that there will be three additional usable pitches (more than doubling the pitch space available) due to the levelling of the land to the west mentioned in section 6.33. the diagram on pg 4 has this area labelled as 'Existing Playing Fields' however given their current gradient they cannot be considered as 'Existing' as they are not currently usable playing fields. As detailed in my objection these should be considered as additional playing fields and the noise impact and mitigation steps do not appear to have been assessed or considered in the Committee report. I request evidence of the

To Reiterate from my original objection:

The noise levels will have a Significant (to Unacceptable) Observed Adverse effect based on experience of sporting and other events that have been held at the school, which have required behavioural changes by the neighbouring homeowners, as detailed previously - these are based on data from the noise report which does not include the additional impact of doubling the available playing pitches. Government advice (Noise Exposure Hierarchy) here appears to be an avoidance or prevention of developments that cause this level of noise disturbance, so again we request the committee take these guidelines into account and decline permission for this Development in its entirety.

Robert H
22 Field View

Appendix 3 - Written Statement from Adam Osman

Ref 192049 Impact on Field View properties

We are deeply concerned about proposed usage, access to facilities and opening hours which will increase noise/light pollution and impact residents particularly along the QAS/ Field View boundary.

In addition to noise from additional users of the new sports facilities, we already experience regular issues arising from people using the field and the only path situated just 4m from the boundary of our properties.

Existing noise disturbance will increase

You cannot control noise levels caused by people on the path as evidenced by noise disturbance from people using QAS sports facilities, foreign language students and kid's clubs on the field/path.

The path acts as a gathering point for partaking in/watching events. QAS apologised after a noise complaint (20/8/2020) caused by people congregating on the path.

The following day, another complaint was made after a disturbance lasting more than 40 minutes from people on or by the path. A decibel reading from the living room of 18 Field View peaked at 78 decibels (average 62 db). QAS did not respond to this complaint. Numerous residents have previously raised similar complaints.

Movement of the path

On the original comments submitted, it was suggested a new path could be installed on the opposite side of the field. This would largely mitigate noise disturbance described above and have the benefit of being substantially further from the closest residential property on the other side of Henley Road.

Impact of proposed hours of use

The opening hours and proximity of the AGP mean we will be disturbed by light and noise, with the path in continual use until 9.30pm (weekdays) as people return to vehicles.

All houses on the Field View boundary feature small gardens and have rear bedrooms that are 10m from the path. Many of these bedrooms are used by young children/elderly people. Increased noise will have a larger impact as the occupants go to sleep much earlier in the evening (compared to the AGP closure time).

Our houses have rear living areas and thus face the field. Whenever we have windows and doors open, or wish to sit in our gardens, we will be subject to additional noise from people using the AGP or walking on the path. This represents a huge change to the current quiet nature of the area.

The increase in frequency, duration and noise levels is very worrying. There has been a lack of proper reconsultation with neighbours, contrary to the planning officer report. Further analysis of the impact on QAS' neighbours should be undertaken.

The addition of the AGP and floodlights will have a considerable negative impact on our ability to enjoy our properties and directly impact both young children and older residents - many of whom leave their properties to escape current excess noise from QAS.

Signed:

18 Field View, Adam Osman,

8 Field View, Brian Willmott,

10 Field View, Shalini Chanda,

17 Field View, Chris Lane,

19 Field View, Gemma Davey, |

Appendix 4 - Written Statement from CADRA

CADRA expresses appreciation to Officers, Councillors, and the School for working to reduce the impact of the new sports facilities on residents in the surrounding area. We welcome the restricted hours during school term and the change in overflow parking with access from Henley Road and not Grosvenor Road.

The report makes no reference to any use in the school holidays. We request a further condition restricting use by other groups during the school holidays.

Appendix 5 - Written Statement from Alison Ries

Name: Dr A C Ries, 70 Grosvenor Road Caversham RG4 5ES

I appreciate the late arrival of this statement but I would be grateful if it could be submitted to the Planning Applications Committee on 13th January 2021 at 6.30pm

I welcome the changes that have been made in the proposed revision and the fact that the concerns of local residents have been taken on board.

However I am concerned that, if the revised planning application is granted, it is not the start of an iterative process of small changes that become detrimental to the local community and environment. In particular there is no change to:

- The use of the tennis court floodlights being extended after 18.30.
- Increased commercial use of the tennis courts, e.g a link up with CLTC.
- Use of the Grosvenor Road car park with access from Grosvenor Road, other than that by QAS sixth formers.

The increased use of sporting facilities and/or the use of Grosvenor Road car park over and above that stated in the revised proposal would not only be detrimental to the local community and environment but also a serious safety risk for users of Grosvenor Road as the Highways Officer has commented on the initial proposal "*Grosvenor Road is not constructed up [to] adopted standards with no pedestrian footways. I am not satisfied from the information submitted that the intensified use of the access can be accommodated without resulting in any road safety issues*".

I therefore feel it is very important that any approval of the application is very clear on the limitations of use as set out in the revised proposal and that this is not changed in the future.

Appendix 6 - Written Statement from Brian Cairns

I received your letter dated 4th Jan today (11th). Written statement as below.

I Support the scheme, subject to the following being confirmed pre-commencement:

1. New Barrier

With reference to the Committee Report, Section 2, the Proposed Site Layout Plan. This plan shows a "New Barrier" to the Grosvenor Road access point. Can the applicant confirm that the purpose for this barrier is now redundant, given that the car-parking has now been removed from the scheme, and that there will be no access allowed (either vehicular or on foot) to the new facilities provided via this access road?

2. Historic Boundary Wall

Can the applicant confirm that the historic boundary wall will not now be modified, as originally proposed in the Design & Access Statement, 3.18 TRAFFIC & HIGHWAYS : "... We propose to move the gate piers approx. 3m to the north to allow the drive to be straight into the site...."?

I expect to attend the meeting.

Many thanks,

Brian Cairns

33 Derby Road

Appendix 7 - Written Statement from Gemma Best

Dear Planning Application committee,

I would like to express further ongoing concerns to the increased noise pollution from this proposal if approved for community use.

6.1. The community use of the school highlighted today predominantly involves use of buildings by the main car park away from private residents. This use involves very little foot flow on the pathway situated at the back of the short gardens of Field View residents (*With the exception of swimming which is minimal*). Allowing community use of the tennis courts and AGP to sports clubs (often involving approx. 15 people per team), will significantly increase the foot flow and in turn the noise due to the increased amount of people passing from the facility to the car park till very late in the evening and at weekends. Please be compassionate and consider how unpleasant this will be for residents.

6.57. I disagree with that statement that *"the facilities will not have a detrimental impact on residents"* and that the mental health and well-being of residents really hasn't been fully considered or respected. I and my fellow neighbours (some vulnerable & elderly) use gardening and taking time to enjoy the nature and quietness of our private gardens to sustain our mental health and well-being, especially to unwind after a busy working day/week. This is more important than ever as we continue to "work from home" and anticipate this working pattern will become the norm after the COVID-19 pandemic.

I firmly believe we will be hugely impacted due to the increased noise late into the evening and weekends. The opening time till 9pm, which is proposed on weekdays, is also ridiculously late and not acceptable for outdoor activities in residential areas especially as some residents also have small children. I personally see no benefit for the local residents, only financial gain for the school.

Numerous sports and recreation facilities are already widely available in the area and **I would like to request to suit the needs of the school and residents that the new facilities be restricted to school use ONLY with no option to open for wider community use.**

Many thanks
Best regards

Gemma Best
Resident at 16 Field View

Appendix 8 - Written Statement from Helen Savidge

We bought houses backing onto a grass school field, expecting school use. Currently there is no use on Sundays throughout the year, 7 months of no use on Saturdays and no use in the evenings all year. There is no use at all during July between the school finishing and the playscheme starting in the summer holidays which uses the field during the school year for a couple of hours each day. This proposal is for an intensification of use to every single day of the year.

There are so many conflicting statements about level of use in the documents – the design and access statement stated no use at weekends and made no mention of holidays. How have we now ended up with a proposal that potentially there will be an extra 134 days of commercial use? The proposal is for another 15 hours of commercial use every school week on top of this? This proposal is effectively a change of land use and income generation by the school on an industrial scale. If this level of use is accepted, we will be living next to a commercial sports centre. The Abbey School in a residential area does not have permission for these hours of commercial use!

No baseline noise and light levels have been taken at all so officers have no idea as to the potential escalation in noise, there are only predictions. It could be louder. Predicted 50+ DB for Field View are classified as moderately annoying by the World Health Organisation. We will therefore be 'moderately annoyed' every day of the year. What has happened to our right to quiet enjoyment of our property and quality of life?

Our own baseline data using sound engineer equipment, in August this year shows there will be a predicted increase of around 10DB during parts of the day and higher in the evenings. The developer themselves state that a change of 7DB is a substantial difference. This is a huge adverse change in the acoustic character of the area. Will we have to shut windows in the summer? Spend less time in our gardens?

RBC has proposed an acoustic fence which it considers will bring noise levels down to acceptable levels. It has no evidence for this yet. Please restrict use to the school only whilst real data is collected to establish whether this is correct. The school can apply again if it wishes to extend hours further once it has evidence. Do not set the precedent of this scale of commercial use until this information is available.

Sports England states planning decisions should aim to avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.' Use of the tennis courts has been restricted to ensure a satisfactory level of residential amenity is retained for nearby properties. Please give AGP and Field View the same consideration and particularly now in view of the move to home working since this application was made?

496 words

Helen Savidge 14 Field View

Debbie Matthews 12 Field View

Tim Peach 11 Field View

Sally Newman 15 Field View |

If needed I can provide email evidence confirming the support of this statement and that they have agreed to their email addresses being posted for verification if needed by the council

Appendix 9 - Written Statement from Howard Ballard

From Mr Howard Ballard, 99 Henley Road, Caversham RG4 6DS

Having re-reviewed the plans and amended information I am still opposed to the proposed development as it stands. The main contentions are the location of the indoor tennis courts adjacent to the road, and the height of the floodlight pylons for the hockey/lacrosse pitch.

The objection is on the impact to the locality, changing the appearance and "feel" from a residential main road to that of the edge of a light industrial area similar to Hedley Road in Woodley. The indoor tennis facility design chosen gives the impression of industrial buildings, and that close to the road this would cement this impression. Couple this with the height of the proposed light pylons this then looks like an industrial lorry park rather than a school facility.

Totally opposing floodlighting in this area, especially for the limited time they would be on, would be without foundation given the 8-10m high street lights on the Henley Road. Light spill therefore should not be a problem if the floodlights were limited to the height of the street lights as the current light spill is already far greater. Similar pitches at Hugh Farringdon School adjacent to the Bath Road do not require the height of pylon proposed in this planning application.

Likewise the indoor courts do not need to be positioned next to the road to shield from the tennis court illuminations, the proposed court lighting being only 8m high, the street lighting being taller, and the road shielded by trees from the courts. Replacing the trees that were originally in the SE corner adjacent to No 90 Henley Road should provide adequate screening if necessary. Moving the indoor facility to adjacent to the proposed pavilion would not be an issue, be far enough from the road to give a different vista, retain the "feel" of the locality and, of course, provide users of the facility to get from the changing rooms to the courts in the dry.

My stance would move from objection to support *if* these two aspects were changed, i.e

No light pylon taller than the Henley Road Streetlamps

The indoor facility positioned where courts 3, 4, 5 & 6 are currently planned, and moved away from the road.

As a resident I therefore request the planning committee to Reject the proposals as they currently stand but advise that revised plans would be considered if these two aspects are amended.

Once again, had the school canvassed the views of the residents before submitting the proposal they would have had a better outcome.

I enclose a photograph from the road of the SE corner of the site, and an impression of what this would look like if the current plans go ahead.



SE corner of Queen Anne's School grounds from Henley Road



Impression of SE corner of Queen Anne's School grounds from Henley Road if development permitted

Appendix 10 - Written Statement from Lucia Susani

The following written statement is for consideration by the members of the Planning Applications Committee, in advance of the meeting on 13 January 2021. As resident at 62 Grosvenor Road, located close to the eastern boundary of the proposed sports facilities, I would like submit a continued objection to the development, on the following grounds:

1. Noise:

The revised application allows for use of the tennis courts until 6:30 pm, and of the astroturf pitch until 9pm. I believe this will result in significant new levels of noise disturbance to surrounding residents, notwithstanding the new acoustic fencing. According to the revised application, a maximum of approximately 70 people may be using the pitches and courts in the evenings. This however does not include spectators or guests using the pavilion or grounds during special events, in particular on weekends, which are not accounted for in the noise modelling. The new noise levels would completely alter the soundscape of our residential life, and destroy the enjoyment of our summer use of our garden.

2. Light intrusion and light pollution:

The proposed revised floodlighting scheme for the tennis court and astroturf uses **eleven** 10m high masts and **eight** 15m high masts. Light spill from such a height and such a number of sources onto Grosvenor Road will be inevitable, as the proposed columns are considerably higher than any trees or fences within or outside the site boundaries. Also, our road has reduced lighting and is therefore relatively dark in the evenings. The light intrusion will change the character of the road and our residential area considerably.

It is worth noting that a recent application for floodlights (Planning Ref 170176) of a reduced height of 6.7m, at a residential location in Caversham, was refused by Reading Borough Council, as the proposed works were expected by to cause “*damaging noise and light pollution which would be harmful to the character and appearance of local area and have a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing nearby residential properties*” (RBC). I submit that the same conditions apply to the current application.

3. Traffic and parking issues:

I am pleased that the revised application has removed the parking and access off Grosvenor Road. However, I am concerned that the prospect of parking in this location (and related use of Grosvenor Road for access) will be revived were the development to be established. The location is convenient to users and preferable to the main car park for Queen Anne. Its adoption would result in extensive access of our private road by community users, leading to traffic nuisance, noise and significant safety issues (Grosvenor Road has no pavements).

4. Conclusion

May I urge the Committee to refuse the proposal, or, if it were to go forward, to instigate clear planning conditions to limit the hours of use, reduce the height of floodlights, and permanently restrict the use of the Grosvenor Road area for parking.

Yours faithfully

Lucia Susani
62 Grosvenor Road

Appendix 11 - Written Statement from Maurice Hayes

i am all for Sport and activity provided it doesn't impinge on normal life

the level of noise when Queen Ann's have (i think Lacrosse matches) at w/e's is very high

i'm sure the Tennis activity will be very quiet BUT hockey will not

i have re-visited the planning application

and make the same points as previous (as a resident of Field View and as a Director of the Residents Management Group)

#Sound blocking barriers should be installed at the Field View end of the Sports Field

#there are serious concerns re: floodlights in terms of positions and usage (especially outside of School hours)

regards

Maurice Hayes

Appendix 12 - Written Statement from Hazel Dilley

I am writing to you on my behalf and also on behalf of Janet Hall of 87B Henley Road in protest at the above Application. We both feel that the construction of the sports building is an eye sore and also will turn this area into an industrial area. We also object to the increased lighting which will affect our properties. Our houses are below street level due to the area being a hill. This means that the flood lighting will light up our bedrooms. Then we have the increase in noise in the evenings and also 52 weeks of the year instead of the normal school hour noises which is acceptable.

My neighbour Mrs Janet Hall is getting increasingly depressed with this proposed planning application, which, if we have read correctly you are going to railroad it in no matter what we say. We have decided that we shall probably have to move as this application will make our lives very unpleasant.

Please accept our objections from both myself Mrs Hazel Dilley of 87A Henley Road and Mrs Janet Hall of 87B Henley Road.

Appendix 13 - Written Statement from Anthony Evans

Our principle objection to application 192049 relates to the planned access to the site from Grosvenor Road. Whilst we can see that it is commendable that the intention is to extend the use of the tennis facilities to the local community, the direct consequence of this will inevitably be a great increase in the generation of traffic coming onto Grosvenor Road from the Henley Road. We feel this will significantly impact the character of the road, which is by its nature quiet and largely undisturbed by regular traffic. Observing the generation of traffic that comes to and from other tennis clubs in the local area, it seems to us that this consequence of the planned development has not been properly considered or accounted for. This is not to mention the disruption it could also cause to the flow of traffic on the Henley Road at busy times, as cars wait to be able to turn onto Grosvenor Road. Inevitably with more traffic comes greater noise and disturbance for local residents, which equally impacts detrimentally on the character of the road as it currently is. Our view is therefore that even if the development itself were to go ahead, the planned entrance from Grosvenor Road should not be permitted and the school's current entrance should remain the point of access for this facility.