

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3 APRIL 2019

Ward: Mapledurham

App No.: 190240/REG3

Address: Mapledurham Playing Fields, Upper Woodcote Road, Caversham

Proposal: Landscaping works to the playing fields including a new tree lined and lit central avenue from Chazey Road, proposed perimeter footpaths with associated seating and trim trail equipment to the western part of the playing fields and re-profiling and drainage improvements to the grass sports pitches to the eastern part of the playing fields

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Date received: 18th February 2019

Major Application target decision date: 20th May 2019

RECOMMENDATION:

Subject to Notification of the application to the Secretary of State (via the National Planning Casework Unit) to decide if he wishes to 'call-in' the application;

GRANT full planning permission subject to the following conditions:

Conditions to include:

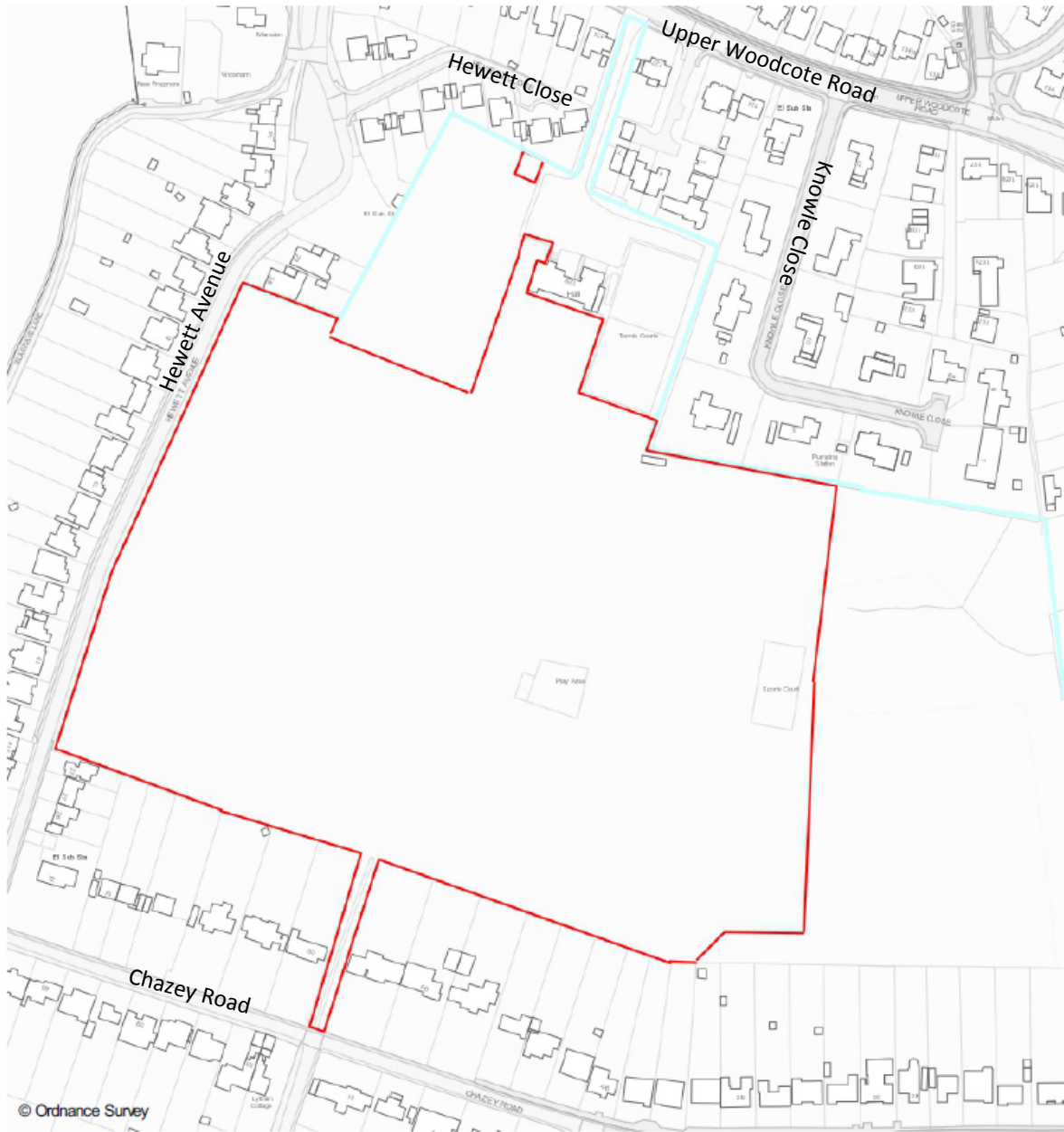
1. TL1 std three years
2. Approved plans
3. No commencement of works, before submission and approval of a badger sett survey
4. Provision of tree protection fencing: erection prior to commencement
5. No development before submission and approval of a Construction Management Statement (CMS)
6. L2a Landscaping: submission of hard/soft landscaping scheme
7. L2b Landscaping: implementation
8. L3 Landscaping: maintenance/aftercare
9. Landscaping: replacement of failures within five years
10. Hours of working (std)
11. Submission and approval of a parking plan for the overflow car park
12. Submission and approval of access details for the overflow car park
13. No bonfires during construction
14. Lighting columns to be switched off at 10pm each day
15. Implementation of soakaways as per approved details
16. Submission and approval of details of ramped servicing access
17. Submission and approval of a scheme of archaeological mitigation

Informatives:

1. Positive and proactive
2. S59 Highways Act
3. Other permissions/consents may be required
4. This planning permission confers no right of access, nor does it infringe Civil Rights
5. Landscaping ongoing works informative
6. Environmental Protection Act

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mapledurham Playing Fields is the largest area of public open space in Caversham. The site is accessed from Upper Woodcote Road to the north and Chazey Avenue in the South and at various openings there is also pedestrian access from Hewett Avenue in the West. It has boundaries with Chazey Road in the south and Hewett Avenue to the west and the rear gardens of properties on St. Peters Avenue in the east.
- 1.2 Trees on the playing fields tend to be towards the edges, although there is a line of trees running west-east. There is also a hard-surfaced basketball area towards the east and to the north of that is Mapledurham Lawn Tennis Club, which has a veranda on the eastern side of the Pavilion. The Playing Fields currently accommodate nine grassed playing pitches, mostly marked out for football.
- 1.3 Although owned by the Mapledurham Playing Fields Trust, as Trustee of the Recreation Ground Charity, Reading Borough Council is responsible for delivering the objectives of the Charity which includes the provision and maintenance of the playing fields for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Mapledurham and the Borough of Reading.
- 1.4 Planning permission (ref. 171023) was granted on 14th August 2018 for the erection of 2FE primary school (350 pupils) with associated landscaping, multiuse games area (MUGA), car and cycle parking, and servicing in the north-west corner of the playing field. A varied version (ref. 182200) of this planning permission was granted on 25th February 2019 which included minor (material) changes to the approved plans and landscaping.
- 1.5 As part of this latter variation permission, a number of mitigation measures in relation to the retained areas of the playing fields were secured by S106 agreement. These mitigation measures require planning permission in their own right and are subject to this planning application.



Location plan (not to scale)



Aerial view of the Mapledurham Playing Fields

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The mitigation measures required are:

- Re-grading and drainage of parts of the playing fields
- Removal of existing basketball court
- Relocation of existing children's play area
- Landscaping, tree planting and habitat enhancements
- Reconfigured football pitch arrangement

2.2 The application seeks full planning permission primarily to profile and provide drainage improvements to the grass sports pitches to the eastern part of the playing fields but also for landscaping works to the playing fields including new trees and a tree lined and lit central avenue (path) from Chazey Road, proposed perimeter footpaths with associated seating and trim trail equipment to the western part of the playing fields and provision small overflow car parking area to the north of the site.

2.3 The landscaping masterplan proposed was approved by Mapledurham Trustee Sub-Committee members in February 2019.

2.4 Supporting documents submitted with the application are as follows:

Planning Statement
 Design and Access Statement (DAS)
 Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 Flood Risk Assessment
 Landscaping Master Plan
 Drainage Plan
 Sectional plan of site levels
 Existing and Proposed levels plan
 External Lighting Report
 Ecological Survey

Archaeological Evaluation Report
 Playground layout plan
 Trim Trail Equipment details

2.5 The application is to be determined at Planning Applications Committee because it is a major category application (due to the site area being greater than 1 hectare) and because it is an application for the Council's own development.

2.6 The CIL requirement for landscaping works to playing field open space is nil under the Council's adopted CIL Charging Schedule.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 Relevant planning history is as follows:

130613/REG3	Mapledurham Pavilion: Replacement and extension of roof, installation of new roof lights and construction of glazed veranda on east elevation	PERMISSION GRANTED 1/7/2013. Under construction (this permission is still 'alive' as the works to the verandah and café for the tennis club have been undertaken.
162017/PREAPP	The application land: Erection of 2FE primary school.	OBSERVATIONS SENT 14/3/2017
171023/FUL	Erection of 2FE primary school (350 pupils) with associated landscaping, multi-use games area (MUGA), car and cycle parking, and servicing	PERMISSION GRANTED (S106) 14/8/2018
182200/VARIAT	Erection of 2FE primary school (350 pupils) with associated landscaping, multi-use games area (MUGA), car and cycle parking, and servicing, without complying with conditions 2 (approved plans), 9 (landscaping scheme) and 10 (details of hard and soft landscaping of the MPF Community Car Park) of planning permission 171023/FUL.	PERMISSION GRANTED (S106) 25/02/2019
182012/PREAPP	Landscaping works to Mapledurham Playing Field	OBSERVATIONS SENT 5/2/2019
182140/FUL	Erection of six floodlighting columns (6.7m high) supporting six LED lamps and addition of six additional LED lamps to five existing 6.7m high floodlighting columns to providing lighting to courts two and three (Mapledurham Lawn Tennis Club)	UNDER CONSIDERATION

4. CONSULTATIONS

Statutory Consultees

- 4.1 Sport England has been consulted on the planning application and is a statutory consultee on all planning applications affecting playing field land. Their policy is to oppose the granting of planning permissions for any development which would lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of, all/part of a playing field, unless one of more of the five exceptions stated in their Playing Field's Policy apply.

Sport England objects to the application, due to the impact of the additional central path and trees on the playing field and does not consider that the application accords with any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.

Sports England's full comments are set out below:

The proposal and Impact on Playing Field

It is proposed to undertake landscaping works at Mapledurham Playing Fields. The works include a new footpath through the centre of the playing fields to link the residential development surrounding the park with the new school (already granted planning permission). This is a well-used site for community football and Sport England welcomes the proposed improvements to the quality of the pitches as reorganisation of the pitches is required to mitigate for the loss of playing field resulting from the proposals.

The Football Foundation, commenting on behalf of the Football Association (FA) has expressed concerns to us about the run-off areas of the pitches and the ability to reconfigure the pitches in the future. They have also expressed concerns regarding future car parking provision on the site.

Assessment against Sport England Policy/NPPF

Sport England considers that a new path is required otherwise desire lines across the pitches could potentially form (from access to the school) which would damage the pitches. In addition, Sport England does not wish to unduly delay the works to the pitches to improve these playing fields. However, we (and the Football Foundation/FA) are concerned that the tree lined 3m path across the pitches with trees on either side removes a large area of playing field. This will reduce the ability to reconfigure pitches on the remaining playing field in future. In addition, the run-offs for some of the pitches appear to extend under or very close to some of the proposed trees. The landscaping plan should be adjusted to show that the pitch run-offs can be accommodated alongside the trees.

Would the Council also be prepared to move one line of trees from the proposals? And/or potentially reduce the width of the footpath? These measures would help reduce the impact on the playing field and provide for the opportunity to further improve the car park in the future.

Finally, further car parking is required on the site to continue to support community football. It is understood that a new overflow car parking area of 12 additional spaces (to the north of the school site) has been put forward in previous proposals. However, only approximately 6 spaces are shown on this plan. Whilst it may fall outside some of the scope of this planning application, it is important that the community football club has access to these additional spaces and to all site parking for peak football times, i.e. including the school car park on Saturday mornings.

Sport England therefore objects to this proposal due to the impact of the additional path and trees on the playing field, we may withdraw this objection if the Council is able to

address our concerns in relation to the above (subject to further consultation with the Football Foundation/FA).

Other

- 4.2 RBC Transport Strategy - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement and details of the parking layout and access to the overflow car park area.
- 4.3 RBC Environmental Protection - No objection (See commentary in Appraisal below).
- 4.4 RBC Leisure and Recreation - Comments not received at the time of writing this report.
- 4.5 RBC Planning Natural Environment Team - No objection, subject to conditions requiring the development to be undertaken in accordance with the submitted arboricultural statement, secure submission and approval of landscaping specifications, implementation of the landscaping and maintenance of the landscaping.
- 4.6 RBC Ecologist - Advises that landscaping proposals to the central avenue should be amended to include a native tree species and recommends a condition to secure a badger sett survey.
- 4.7 RBC SUDS Manager - No objection.
- 4.8 Berkshire Archaeology - No objection, subject to a condition to secure a scheme of archaeological mitigation.

Public Consultation

The following neighbouring properties were sent neighbour consultation letters on this planning application:

Hewett Avenue: 28, 29
Hewett Close: all properties
Upper Woodcote Road: 121-145
Little Woodcote Close, Upper Woodcote Road: 1-7
Knowle Close: 1-7

Site notices were displayed on 1 March 2019 at the following locations:

- on the speed camera pole, near site entrance on Upper Woodcote Road
- telegraph pole, near site entrance on Upper Woodcote Road
- on a lamp post at Mapledurham Pavilion gravel car park
- Hewett Avenue, on the bend by the open space between the Hewett Close Junction and No. 29 Hewett Avenue
- At entrance to playing field, opposite No.s 20/21 Hewett Ave.
- At entrance to playing fields on Chazey Road, opposite River Road junction

At the time of writing this report 54 objections have been received raising the following issues:

Administrative

- Web site does not work - will not accept comments.

Amenity

- Tree lined central avenue would encourage anti-social behaviour by motorcyclists and cyclists. (*Officer comment: the MPF currently has unrestricted access and it is not considered that the formalisation of a route would cause such a risk, although the Council could latterly undertake access restrictions if necessary*)
- Create light pollution
- Air pollution from increase traffic flows to the area
- Daily disruption to a quiet residential area
- Loss of grass surfaces for dog walkers
- Loss of the health benefits associated with green space
- The playing field should be used for recreational purposes a path providing access from one side to another is not needed
- Division of the playing field by the central avenue would adversely impact on the recreational use of the playing fields
- Noise impact of relocated play area which is closer to houses

Transport

- Proposed perimeter footpaths would encourage parking to Hewett Avenue (narrow road)
- The plans would re-purpose Chazey Road as a Public Highway. The Council should adopt it and take over maintenance to ensure it is suitable for new role. Residents should not have to take on responsibility for this (*Officer comment: adoption of the road is not being considered at this time. Were the residents of Chazey Road wish for the road to be adopted, it would first need to be confirmed to have been constructed to an adoptable standard*)
- *The development would encourage parking on Chazey Road which is an un-adopted road, maintenance of the road is paid for by residents who should not have to pay for its increased use as a result of these works (Officer comment: There has been access from Chazey Road to MPF for many years which is an existing facility. The landscaping works are not considered to result in an significant intensification of use of the MPF in terms of vehicular movements)*
 - Access to Chazey Road is unsafe for pedestrians (*Officer comment: this is an existing situation and the objection does not state why the access is considered to be unsafe*)
- The central avenue has all the characteristics of a new access road.
- Object to the blocking off of PROW 43 (*Officer comment: The landscaping application does not impact upon the PROW*).

Character and Appearance of the Area

- The central avenue would change the character of MPF from open green space to an urban park
- The central avenue and trees would divide the open space and be out of character
- Does not accord with RBC's Open Spaces Policy

Natural Environment

- The planning application is disingenuous in saying that there will be a net increase of 42 new trees being planted. Across the site as a whole, the Heights School Planning Application ref. 182200, had approval for removal at least 42 trees (they actually cut down more than this). In total at least 57 mature native or wildlife friendly trees have been removed. Of the 57 trees

to be planted under this current planning application, 40 are Liquidambar which are non-native and not supportive of UK wildlife. That means there is a loss of at least 40 ecologically useful mature trees.

- The proposed planting of Liquidambar trees is contrary to paras. 1.1.10 and 9.3.1 of the Ecological Report submitted as part of this application which recommends that new landscaping should make use of locally sourced native plant species.
- The proposed children's play area should be moved slightly south to allow a line of trees to be planted between the southern boundary of the school and the playing fields to improve aesthetics of the site by screening the school from the pitches
- The ecological report fails to identify that the hedge along Hewett Avenue is a known refuge for House Sparrows which has a UK conservation status of RED. It is not clear what is proposed to the hedge as part of this application. *(Officer Comment: The application proposed to retain this hedgerow)*
- Question where the water drained from the pitches will go.
- Non-native tree species could introduce unknown diseases.
- Lighting will impact upon field birds.
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General

- Proposals are not in-keeping with the objectives of the MPF Trust or findings of the 2017 consultation. *(Officer comment: the application is being considered on its planning merits).*
- Money should be invested in Automatic Number Plate Recognition equipment with residential parking restrictions in Hewett Avenue, Hewett Close and Chazey Road. - Money raised in fines could be re-invested by the Trust in maintenance of the pavilion and playing field *(Officer comment: This does not form part of this planning application is not a material planning consideration)*
- The paths, trees and lighting are unnecessary. Money should be spent on improvements to play equipment or the pavilion.
- RBC has started removal of trees on site without planning permission *(Officer Comment: These works were envisaged under the permission for the new school).*
- The new location for the proposed children's play area is inferior in terms of visibility and access to other parts of the MPF.
- The central avenue would prejudice future use of MPF for community facilities such as summer fete *(Officer comments: The site would still be capable of holding community events)*
- The basketball court should be upgraded rather than removed *(Officer comment: It's loss has been accepted in the earlier planning permissions)*
- Trim trail equipment is inappropriate MPF is not an outdoor gym.
- Too many benches are proposed to the central avenue.
- MPF would be dominated by playing pitches with little spaces for other members of the community.
- The proposals are wholly for the benefit of the new school and no other purpose *(Officer comments: This is a stand-alone planning application for works to the existing playing fields)*
- Facilities for the school should be paid for by the school not RBC *(Officer comments: This is a stand-alone planning application for works to the existing playing fields, pursuant to the s106 for the school variation planning permission, where the contribution pays for these works.)*
- The proposals would restrict future reconfiguration of the pitches

- A more extensive perimeter pathway should be proposed as opposed to a central avenue.
- The application should be deferred until after the MPF Sub- Committee has met to discuss the planning application (*Officer Comment: The plans have been approved by member of the MPF Trustee Sub-Committee*)
- The proposals are contrary to the findings of the public consultation

6 x observations have been received raising the following issues:

Character and Appearance of the Area

- Proposed central avenue and trees is not in keeping with the character of the playing fields
- Central Avenue should be reduced in width
- The proposed lighting is unnecessary
- The proposed central avenue will lead to further development in the north of the MPF site (*Officer comment: no such development is proposed as part of the current application which must be assessed on its own merits*)
- Prefer the existing MPF layout

Amenity

- The playing field should be used for recreational purposes and not providing access from one site to another
- The perimeter footpaths are a good idea and make MPF more accessible. The paths should be extended to circumnavigate the whole of MPF
- There will be disruption to local residents from associated construction work

Natural Environment

- More trees should be planted to replace those that have been lost but not in a central avenue or in a way which changes the open character of the playing fields

3 x letters of support have been received raising the following points:

General

- Proposals would be great for the whole community
- Welcome the inclusion of the pathway across the field which will be helpful to families accessing the new school
- Lighting to the central avenue would support people wishing to use the part in the mornings and afternoons in the winter
- Other parks in the Borough are maintained to a good standard and design and the plans indicate that the enhanced MPF would be too.
- The central avenue would be helpful for parents and children and encourage walking
- The proposed central avenue of trees would enhance the character of the open space

The Warren and District Residents Association (WADRA) objects to the application for the following reasons:

- The application fails to preserve the character of the Playing Fields and disregards the impact of the removal of 56 trees from the site (*Officer comment: 15 trees are proposed to be removed as part of this application*)

which is stand-alone application and separate to the site of the recently permitted school and the application includes mitigating planting).

- The proposals are contrary to RBC Biodiversity Policy and would introduce non-native tree species.
- The central pathway, trees and lighting will inhibit future adjustments to pitch layout, encourage use of Chazey Road for school parking and emphasise the bulk and white appearance of the new school.

Caversham Trent's Football Club (CTFC) supports some elements of the application and objects to others:

CTFC supports:

- The proposed drainage
- The children's play area
- Retention of the Western Poplar trees
- The overflow car park area but strongly seek that this should be for 12 and not 6 spaces
- The perimeter footpath networks and trim trail equipment

CTFC objects to:

- The 6 ornamental trees proposed to the south of the pavilion as these would reduce space for community events
- Trees would be better planted to screen the school from MPF at the southern perimeter fence of the school (*Officer Comment: an additional 3 trees have been added to the landscaping plan in this location*)
- The central avenue would decrease flexibility to reconfigure pitches, results in a tight layout in terms of run off, reduces space for cricket facilities to be added, benefits only the residents of Chazey Road. Consider the path is too wide and with trees to both sides takes up too much space and may provide root issues to the pitches in future. Support the view that the use of non-native trees should be avoided.

CTFC propose that:

- The overflow car park be increased to 12 spaces and have gated entrance (*Officer comment: whilst a small overflow car is proposed as part of this application this is not a requirement of the landscaping works which do not propose to increase level of pitch provision and no significant intensification of use is envisaged*) -
- The perimeter pathway be extended around all of MPF as an alternative to the central pathway but could still link to the Chazey Road access point
- Pathway from the community car park to the children's play area should be against the school fence as CTFC is keen to obtain funding for changing rooms to be built to the side of the pavilion by the school (*Officer comment: this is not a relevant consideration for this application - any future planning application for a new changing room facility would be considered on its own merits*)

Reading Urban Wildlife Group (ECONET) objects to the application for the following reasons:

- Proposed lighting and wide footpath would change the character of MPF
- Would prefer to see an avenue of Lime trees which offer more biodiversity benefits
- Proposed benches would be better positioned outside of the central avenue for people watching football and for parents around the children's play area
- Western hedge is home to house sparrows

- Most other trees to be planted are slow to reach maturity so further interim planting should be proposed (*Officer comment: such a requirement is not set out in planning policy*)

Mapledurham Recreation Grounds Charitable Trust objects to the application for the following reasons:

- The proposed central avenue is out of keeping and environmentally damaging to MPF. It would be vehicle-friendly and invites 'mission creep' and absorption of the north west of the site into the domain of the school.
- The avenue is a harsh and disruptive design element in a natural setting
- Lighting has never existed at the site before and would result in light pollution and encourage after-hours abuse of the site
- Noise pollution from night time football matches (*Officer comment: The application does not proposed lighting to the pitches*)
- Loss of 15 native trees and replacement with non-native species
- The pitches are crowded and too close to the woodland area and are in order to promote only one kind of recreation - football
- The Charitable Trust and Volunteers have carried out significant re-wilding of MPF and this is disregarded by the application. (*Officer comment: there is no policy designation requiring the re-wilding of this District Park*).
- Tarmac surfacing to the car park is not aesthetically pleasing (*Officer comment: The existing community car park does not form part of this application. In any event, details of the surfacing of the MPF car park have not been approved and the conditions include for details of the surfacing of the overflow parking area*)
- The proposals have a negative environmental impact on wildlife passages and is close to the AONB
- Dog walkers are the predominant user of MPF- the avenue will spoil their enjoyment of the playing fields and more so if used by car (*Officer comment: The avenue is not proposed as a vehicular access*)
- The trees were an area where park users congregated during hot weather. Their use as a social, environmental and aesthetic amenity will disappear. (*Officer Comment: trees are being re-provided which will fulfil these purposes*).
- There are no genuine enhancements proposed as part of this application - the site is not just for football pitches and is a recreation ground

5. **RELEVANT POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)

The following chapters are relevant:

- 2. Achieving Sustainable Development
- 8. Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
- 12. Achieving Well-Designed places
- 14. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
- 15. Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

5.3 Reading Borough Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (January 2008) (as altered 2015)

CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design)
CS2 (Waste Minimisation)
CS3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity)
CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development)
CS5 (Inclusive Access)
CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)
CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities)
CS20 (Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy)
CS23 (Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans)
CS25 (Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development)
CS28 (Loss of Open Space)
CS30 (Access to Open Space)
CS31 (Additional and Existing Community Facilities)
CS32 (Impacts on Community Facilities)
CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)
CS35 (Flooding)
CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology)
CS37 (Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space)
CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)

5.4 Reading Borough Local Development Framework: Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (as altered 2015)

SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
DM1 (Adaptation to Climate Change)
DM3 (Infrastructure Planning)
DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)
DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)
DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
DM15 (Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses)
DM16 (Provision of Open Space)
DM17 (Green Network)
DM18 (Tree Planting)
DM19 (Air Quality)
SA16 (Public and Strategic Open Space)
SA17 (Major Landscape Features)

5.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Standards and Design (October 2011)
Planning Obligations under S.106 (April 2015)

5.6 Other Reading Borough Council Corporate documents

Reading Open Space Strategy (2007)
Reading Tree Strategy (2010)
Local Transport Plan 3: Strategy 2011-2026 (2011)
Mapledurham Playing Fields Trust Sub-Committee reports

5.7 Emerging New Local Plan

The Council is preparing a new local plan (to cover the period up to 2036), which in time will supersede the present suite of Local Development Framework (LDF) documents. The Submission Draft version of the Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration in March 2018 and this was then the subject of the Local Plan Examination, hearings for which were held in September-October 2018.

However, members are advised that the Government has not advised on the weight which can be attached to any such emerging documents and officers advise that the adopted policies of the Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document shall continue to function as the Development Plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning Act. Officers advise that the new Local Plan continues (rolls forward) many of the themes of the current LDF documents, but that little weight can be attached to it at this time.

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues raised by this planning application are:

- Principle (Pitch Provision, Other Community Facilities, Accessibility, Impact on Character of the Playing Fields)
- Natural Environment
- Impact on Amenity
- Transport
- Flooding
- Archaeology

Principle

- 6.1 As referred to above, the basic principles of the open space mitigation works which are proposed as part of this planning application were agreed as part of planning permission ref. 171023/FUL (as varied by permission 182200/VARIAT) for the new school and form part of the associated section 106 legal agreement to that permission. This current application therefore seeks to deliver on the requirements envisaged in the earlier permissions.
- 6.2 The landscaping works proposed as part of this application have been approved by the Mapledurham Trustee Sub-Committee members.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding the above, the current proposal is a standalone planning application and must be considered on its own merits.
- 6.4 Open spaces and playing fields enjoy strong policy protection in the NPPF (2019). Paragraph 96 states that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.
- 6.5 The site is designated as Public and Strategic open space under Policy SA16. This policy states that important areas of Public and Strategic Open Space will be protected from development. Proposals that would result in the loss of any of these areas of open space, or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public, will not be permitted.
- 6.6 Policy SA16 is linked to Policy CS28 (Loss of Open Space) which states that development proposals that will result in the loss of open space or jeopardise its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted.

- 6.7 The NPPF defines open space as ‘all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity’.
- 6.8 Policy CS31 encourages the provision of new, extended and improved community facilities.
- 6.9 The proposed landscaping works would not result in the loss of open space but seek to reconfigure the open space provision following the planning permission granted for the new school in the north of the site, in order to maximise the playability of the pitches, whilst augmenting landscaping, habitats and other facilities.

Pitch Provision

- 6.10 The planning permissions given for the new school permitted a reduction in the number of playing pitches from 9 to 8, due to the siting of the school. The proposed reconfiguration of the sports pitches under the current application does not seek any reduction in number of sports pitches to the playing fields and maintains provision at 8 but includes a number of measures intended to enhance the quality of the playing pitches.
- 6.11 The area of the playing fields to the eastern side of the new central avenue is to be re-profiled to provide a ‘sports terrace area’. This will entail re-profiling of the surface to provide more even and level pitches. The pitches will be raised in parts and lowered in others. In general pitch levels will be lowered to the west to parts adjacent to the new proposed central avenue with levels raised to the eastern edge of the pitches. This addresses the current east to west slope to the pitches and provides a more gentle pitch gradient slope in this direction of - 1.25%. The football pitches to the west of the central avenue are not proposed to be re-profiled or to have drainage installed due to archaeological constraints, but this application indicates a rearrangement of the pitches. Although football is considered to be the dominant user, RBC Leisure has confirmed that other uses, such as cricket, could adequately function on the easterly playing field area.
- 6.12 The current playing pitches are not drained via any specific sub-surface systems. The regrading works propose that pitch drainage would also be installed to the five pitches to the eastern side of the central avenue. This would involve a soakaway consisting of a network of sand grooves below the surface of the pitches. The grooves would link to a sub-surface pipe network below which, assisted by the slight natural gradient to the pitches would drain towards a soakaway outfall to the eastern edges of the pitches.
- 6.13 The re-profiling and drainage enhancements would provide an enhanced level of playing pitch provision. The reduced pitch gradients and drainage would increase the quality of pitches and their carrying capacity, particularly for football. The provision of drained pitches would also allow for rotation with the non-drained pitches to the western side of the central avenue and allow these to be rested in times and areas of high wear and use. The pitch layout has also been designed to allow for a different mix of pitch sizes to be accommodated and for pitches to be rotated as user needs change.
- 6.14 In terms of sports pitch facilities, officers are satisfied that the proposed landscaping works would provide for an enhanced level of provision for users.
- 6.15 Sport England is a Statutory Consultee on all planning applications affecting pitches on open spaces and has been consulted on this application. Sport England’s position is that they currently object to the application, due to the impact of the additional central path and trees on the playing field. Whilst Sport England accepts the principle

that a new path is required (otherwise desire lines across the pitch could potentially form) they are concerned that the proposed 3m wide pathway across the site removes a large area of the playing fields which they consider would reduce the ability to reconfigure pitches in the future, whilst the run-off areas for some of the pitches extend very close to some the proposed trees along the central pathway. To address these issues, Sport England suggests that one line of trees (20 trees) is removed from one side of the pathway and/or the width of the pathway is reduced. The objection also raises a further, ancillary issue advising that further car parking is required on site to support local community football.

- 6.17 Sport England (SE) does not consider that the application accords with any of its 5 exception criteria to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. Were SE to sustain their objection and the Committee resolve to grant permission, that resolution would need to be referred to the Secretary of State to decide whether the application should be 'called in'.
- 6.18 It must be remembered that planning permission 171023/FUL agreed the principle of the school on the playing field and a contribution with subsequent planning application to improve the MPF. Having carefully considered the SE objection, officers consider that the most relevant of the exception of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy is no. 4 which states that: *The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field of equivalent or better quality, and of equivalent or greater quantity, and in a suitable location, and subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.*
- 6.19 Officers consider that the proposal has significant merits in the context of exception no.4 as set out above. The proposed landscaping works would result in a greater amount of pitch provision above that currently available. The proposed pitch provision would also exceed that amount of pitch provision that was available prior to the granting of planning permission for the new school in the northwest corner of the site. Approximate figures of the total pitch area/coverage are set out below:
- Before the Heights school proposal = c.38,000m²
 - Currently available = c.33,000m² (school site is circa 5,000m²)
 - After landscape master plan implemented = 40,000m²
- 6.20 The application proposes to bring into sports pitch use an area of around 6000m² in the eastern part of the playing fields that is currently taken up by a circle of trees and the children's playground. The children's playground is 600m² in size and is to be relocated to the north west part of the playing fields. A basketball court (a further 600m²) is also to be removed from the eastern part of the playing fields and this area is to be turfed/grassed and would also form part of the new pitch provision. The proposed 3m wide central avenue takes up only approximately 3000m² so there is a net gain in amount of pitch area provision.
- 6.21 The playing fields currently have a playing pitch provision of 8 pitches, some of which are under sized. The application proposes to retain this number of pitches but to provide pitches which all adhere to FA recommended sizes.
- 6.22 As well as providing a greater amount of pitch area provision, the application includes 24,000m² of drained pitches, for the five pitches located in the eastern part of the playing fields. This is a significant enhancement as none of the current pitches have drainage and this would allow for extensive flexibility in pitch configurations in future.

- 6.23 In terms of pitch runoff areas, all the pitches would meet recommended FA sizes. The proposed layout plan shows an adult 11 v 11 pitch and 7 v 7 pitch adjacent to the proposed central avenue of trees, however, adult and 7 v 7 games would not normally take place at the same time. The proposed trees for the avenue (Liquidamabars) have also been chosen with the pitches in mind on the basis of their limited canopy spread and compact form so as to not interfere with run off areas or the pitches themselves. The tree officer is content that the species is appropriate and that rooting areas and canopies would not obstruct the playing areas or surrounding run-off and 'respect' zones.
- 6.24 The playing fields are also not just for sports pitches and the wider community, accessibility and tree and habitat benefits of the proposals of the works set out elsewhere within this report are considered highly pertinent to the assessment of the application as a whole. Notwithstanding Sport England's objection to the application, officers are satisfied that the proposed landscaping works would provide an enhanced level of playing pitch provision and disagree that the SE's exceptions policy is not satisfied. Officers will work with SE between now and your meeting to seek to resolve SE's points and to attempt to satisfy their concerns and remove their objection.

Other Community Facilities

- 6.25 The other significant alterations proposed to the provision of community recreation/leisure provision at the site are the relocation of the children's play area and removal of the basketball court.
- 6.26 The removal of the basketball court was taken into account when planning permission was granted for the new school at the site. The permissions secured a community use agreement to secure a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to be provided as part of the school for community use outside of school hours. The existing basketball hardstanding is situated in an isolated location towards the eastern edge of the Playing Fields and is not served by any paths or lighting. The application states that the court is very poorly used. The MUGA to be provided as part of the new school is in a more accessible location in the north of the site and. The MUGA would also be fenced and lit providing a higher standard of a facility than the existing basketball court and would also support a much wider range of uses. Officers consider that the community use agreement for the new MUGA would satisfactorily mitigate for the removal of the basketball court.
- 6.27 The existing children's play area is also situated in an isolated location in the centre of the playing fields and is not served by formal footpath access and contains limited play equipment. The application states that use of the play area is limited compared to most other Council play areas within the Borough. It is proposed to relocate the playground to the north of the site adjacent to the western side of the proposed new central avenue and to the south of the new school site. This location is more accessible being closer to the MPF community car park, proposed new school, the existing pavilion and would also be located conveniently for the proposed new central avenue and perimeter footpaths to the western part of the playing fields.
- 6.28 The relocated play area would also provide for significantly increased play equipment provision. At around 600m² in size, the play area would be classified as a Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). The play area would consist of a low level fenced space for junior and toddler equipment with safety surfacing and seating for parents.
- 6.29 The proposed location for the new play area is one of a number that were considered by the Applicant in preparing this application and this was considered to be the most suitable. The play area's location in the north of the site also has advantages for accessibility with close proximity to the proposed pathways and also to the community car park and pavilion.

- 6.30 Officers are satisfied that the improved level of play equipment provision and accessibility of the play area would provide for enhanced children's play area facilities at the site.

Accessibility

- 6.31 The proposed landscaping works include formation of pathways across and around the perimeter of the playing fields. There are currently no formal footpaths or lighting through the playing fields. The most significant addition would be the introduction of a formalised footpath in the form of a 'central avenue' which would connect the southern entrance to the playing fields from Chazey Road to the northern part of the site where the pavilion, community car park, new school including community MUGA and relocated children's play area would be situated. It is proposed that this central avenue would be lit via 12 x 5m high LED lamp columns. This formal 3 metre wide path would facilitate easier access to the community facilities located in the north of the site for people arriving by foot or cycle from the south. The floodlit nature of the avenue would provide better visibility and a feeling of safety for people wishing to cross the playing fields or utilise it for walking during dusk or early night-time hours whilst still providing ample opportunity for those users who do not wish to stay on the footpath, for example -dog walkers - to use their own alternative routes across around the field, similar to the existing situation. Benches would be situated along the avenue providing opportunities for rest.
- 6.32 It is also proposed to provide a pathway route around the perimeter of the western part of the playing fields. This would link and connect to the existing informal access points to the playing fields from Hewett Avenue. This would be a 1.5m wide gravel surfaced path. The gravel surfacing of these pathways and also the central avenue would provide more inclusive access to the playing fields for all types of users all year round, in particular for pushchairs, wheelchairs and people requiring a firm, smooth surface to walk. There are currently no pushchair or cycle friendly accessible footpaths at MPF.
- 6.33 The enhanced accessibility of the playing field for different user groups is considered to align with the intentions of paragraph 96 of the NPPF (2019) which encourages access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity noting the importance of this for the health and well-being of communities. The proposal also provides further benefits in this respect in the form of trim trail outdoor fitness equipment which is to be positioned at intervals along the perimeter footpath to the western part of the playing fields and has the potential to encourage different groups of people into using MPF. The enhanced accessibility of MPF would also align with Policies CS5 (Inclusive Access) and CS3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity)

Impact on the character of the Playing Fields

- 6.34 The character and appearance of the playing fields and particularly landscaping are also considered pertinent in terms of the assessment of the proposals against Policies CS28 (Loss of Open Space) and SA16 (Public and Strategic Open Space) and the impact on users' enjoyment of the space. The Mapledurham Playing Fields fulfil an important role in terms of their value as an open, landscaped public space and towards its edges in particular, the space provides a significant tree belt with habitats for wildlife. The South-Eastern corner of the playing fields is part of the identified North Reading Dry Valleys; covered by Policy SA17 (Major Landscape Features). The Dry valley is also a LWS (Local Wildlife Site) and various edges of the site are indicated as part of the Green Network under SDPD Policy DM17. Policy SA17 is linked to Policy CS37 (Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space) and seeks to prevent development from detracting from character and appearance of these areas. Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) also seeks that development should protect the character of the area within which it is located.

- 6.35 Draft Policy EN7 of the emerging Local Plan discusses Local Green Space and Public Open Space and although the plan's policies have little weight, some discussion is relevant. A range of sites will be protected from development under this policy and Mapledurham Playing Fields is identified as site EN7Nn and this has been designated following the advice in the NPPF (paragraph 87 refers). Acknowledging the limited weight, it is advised that the playing fields are an identified Local Green Space and this proposed draft designation effectively 'rolls forward' the existing SA16 designation. The policy has no major departure in emphasis over policies CS28 and SA16.
- 6.36 The sense of openness of the playing fields is most apparent from glimpsed views from Hewett Avenue. Policy SA17 also seeks to protect the nearby edge of the Chilterns AONB from inappropriate development.
- 6.37 The proposed works, by their nature, are considered compatible with the open and green character of the playing fields. The most notable landscaping addition is the central path running north to south through the site and is lined by an avenue of 40 Liquidambar trees and 12 x 5m high lamp columns. The lighting columns would be slim profile and would utilise warm white LED lamps. The avenue would be around 300m in length across the playing field and in terms of impact on openness it is not considered that the addition of 12 slim profile lamp posts spread across the length would result in any unduly prominent visual intrusion. The lamps have been designed to use LED lights with the lamps shielded to reduce light spill and glare and would be controlled (also to be secured by condition) to switch off at 10pm each day. It is acknowledged that in night time hours when the lights are switched on there will undoubtedly be some visible glow from the lamps and impact upon views within and across the playing fields. Given the scale of the playing field area the impact of the lamps upon openness is considered to be limited.
- 6.38 The proposed Liquidambar trees when reaching maturity would be expected to reach a height of between 15m to 21m which would provide a substantial screen to the 5m high lighting columns and reduce the visibility of the lights outside of the central avenue route. At their mature height the avenue of trees would become a significant feature of the landscape. The introduction of these trees is considered a positive and to be reflective of the natural character of the playing fields and the major landscape area. 17 additional trees are also to be planted in the eastern part of the playing field and would assist in mitigating for the loss of the arc of 15 trees required to facilitate reconfiguration of the playing pitches. Three additional fastigiata Beech trees are also proposed in the western part of the playing fields, adjacent to the southern perimeter of the site of the new school and in particular the MUGA to help to provide screening to the MUGA and the retaining wall. Together with the 40 Liquidambar trees, there would be a net gain of 45 trees as part of this landscaping works application. The specific landscaping works are considered in more detail later in this report.
- 6.39 The separation of the proposals from the edge of the Chilterns AONB to the west with the dwellings along Hewett Avenue in between is considered such that there would be no adverse impact upon the character of setting of the AONB.
- 6.40 The other landscaping works proposed as part of the application including re-profiling of the playing pitches, perimeter footpaths, trim trail equipment and relocated children's play area are not considered to materially impact upon the open green character of MPF. These are facilities found in other large parks in the Borough and the overall feeling of openness is provided by the expanses of playing field
- 6.41 Three of the proposed lighting columns would line the access way to the playing fields from Chazey Road and would be visible to views from this the road surrounding this

entrance point. There is existing street-lighting to this road and the introduction of these columns is not considered to adversely impact upon views within the street-scene.

- 6.42 Whilst acknowledging there would be some visual impact on the character of the playing fields from the proposed lamp posts, officers are satisfied that works would result in a significant enhancement to MPF as a whole, notably from enhanced accessibility, sports pitch provision and play facilities and that the proposals would not be detrimental to the use and enjoyment of the playing fields by the public. The proposals are considered to accord with the NPPF, Policies CS28 (Loss of Open Space), CS37 (Major Landscape Feature) and CS31 (Additional and Existing Community Facilities) and Policies SA16 (Public and Strategic Open Space) and SA17 (Major Landscape Features).

Natural Environment

- 6.43 Policy CS7 seeks that development maintains and enhances the character of the area in which it is located including landscaping. Policy CS36 seeks that development should retain, protect and incorporate feature of biodiversity and Policies CS38 and DM18 seek that the Borough's vegetation cover be extended. Policy DM17 seeks to maintain the existing identified Green Links within the Borough.
- 6.44 The application advises that the trees to be removed to facilitate the rearrangement of the pitches are an arch of 15 trees in the eastern part of the playing fields. This is required to facilitate the re-profiling and reconfiguration and includes loss of 5 native trees and 9 'naturalised' species. The trees were surveyed before their removal and 14 were identified to be of low quality and limited amenity value and one was found to be of moderate quality and amenity value.
- 6.45 All other trees within the site are to be retained. These are predominantly located to the site perimeter whilst a line of Poplars towards the centre of the western part of the playing fields is also to be retained. An arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) has been submitted as part of the application including tree protection measures for all retained trees. Notably the proposed gravel pathways would also utilise a 'no dig' construction method to protect nearby tree roots whilst the lighting columns along the initial access point from Chazey Road will be staggered between and forward of existing trees to prevent the need for trees to be pruned for light. To the east of the site where the playing pitches are to be re-profiled, the existing woodland and orchard areas will be protected by Heras-type fencing during these works.
- 6.46 The application identifies that two retained trees would be affected by the proposed landscaping works. This relates to a Wild Cherry tree and Norway Maple adjacent to the existing basketball court which is to be removed. The AIA indicates that the removal of the court is likely to result in some root disturbance but that no long term damage to these trees should occur.
- 6.47 In terms of replacement planting, 20 new trees are proposed toward the North and Eastern areas of the playing fields. These include a Scots Pine (native, of which there are others in the locality), English Oak (native), Beech and some ornamental Dogwood (Cornus). The Tree Officer is satisfied with this mix of planting and notes that the inclusion of one non-native ornamental species is acceptable as planting palettes should generally include some non-natives to address factors such as climate change and pest/disease resilience.
- 6.48 Significant new tree planting is proposed along the central avenue by way of 40 Liquidambar trees. Concerns have been raised regarding the use of this tree in

particular as it is a non-native species. The species selection for this avenue has been given careful consideration by the Applicant with the aim to provide a strong landscape feature that is also compatible with various uses of the playing fields. Importantly, the trees must not adversely impact on the close proximity of the playing pitches either side of the avenue and therefore are required to have limited spread (be of compact form) and not provide known nuisance factors such as honey dew (sap), thorns and fruit. There is also a desire that the tree species must be relatively long lived, provide a strong visual impact and be of high amenity value as a feature avenue should hence many smaller species would not be appropriate. Liquidambar are of a suitable profile to meet these criteria, reaching 15-21m in height at maturity, being compact in form and displaying a distinctive Autumnal colour.

- 6.49 The local concern with this species is noted and reaction that a native species should be used instead is understandable. The RBC Tree Officer advises that it is very difficult to identify a suitable alternative native or even naturalised species, that meets all the criteria summarised above as well as the Liquidambar, which is also known to survive in the locality and across the Borough. 6.50 The Tree Officer advises that it is important to consider using non-native to ensure the tree population in the Borough offers resistance to climate change and pest and disease outbreaks. For example, some representations suggest Lime as a potential species given the prominence of this in the locality, such as along Chazey Road. However, the Borough has a significant percentage of Lime within its tree population making tree coverage at risk should a pest/disease affecting Lime reach the UK.
- 6.51 The wildlife habitat benefits of the proposed planting must also be considered and the ecological appraisal submitted as part of the application notes that tree planting should utilise native species, a point which is also reiterated by the comments of the RBC Ecologist and in objections. The RBC Tree Officer's advice is that whilst the Liquidambar may not have any inherent wildlife value, it meets all other criteria and biodiversity benefits are provided through the other species being planted over the Playing Fields. It is also pertinent to note the intention to stack felled trees within the site to provide habitats, which will be of benefit to different wildlife to those that utilise live trees.
- 6.52 Officers are satisfied that Liquidambers for the avenue and the other species selected present the best option in terms of the both visual appearance and long term compatibility with the leisure and recreation functions of MPF and that the landscaping works as a whole provide sufficient habitable and wildlife benefits to the site.
- 6.54 There would be net gain of 45 trees as part of this landscaping works application. It should be noted that as a stand-alone application it is appropriate to consider tree loss only as part of this application which is separate to and does not include the site of the recently permitted new school. A contribution was secured as part of the S106 agreement for the new school for tree planting and habitat enhancements, therefore the purpose of this application is to deliver improvements to the MPF, over and above that which would otherwise be required by policy for a playing field works planning application. 6.55 The proposed lighting to the central avenue also has the potential to affect wildlife. A ecological assessment which includes an assessment of the impact of the lighting upon commuting bats has been provided and concludes that the proposed LED lamps are appropriate to limit impacts on bats and that 'dark corridors' will be retained within the perimeter woodland of the site such that there would be no impact on commuting or foraging bats. No other adverse wildlife impacts are identified and the document has been reviewed by the RBC Ecologist who concurs with its findings. A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of an updated badger sett survey within 14 days of the start of works on site. If the surveys identifies that a

license to disturb a badger sett is required then such a license is to be submitted to the planning authority prior to the commencement of works.

- 6.56 The proposals are not considered to have any detrimental impacts upon the Green Link and Local Wildlife Area which runs along the woodland to the eastern boundary of MPF, subject to the badger sett survey condition referenced above. Works is not proposed in this part of the site where the woodland and orchard areas are located, whilst the additional tree planting to the eastern part of the playing fields would supplement the Green Link.
- 6.57 Officers are satisfied that the proposed landscaping works would provide acceptable tree and biodiversity enhancements to the site and would accord with Policies CS7, CS36 and CS38 of the Core Strategy and Policies DM17 and DM18 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

Impact on amenity

- 6.58 Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks development should not adversely impact upon the residential amenity of existing and future surrounding occupiers. Policy CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks that development is not damaging to the environment by way of pollution.
- 6.59 A relevant consideration in terms of impact upon the amenity of surrounding residential occupiers is the relocation of the children's play area to the northern part of the site. The nearest residential occupiers to the play area would be located 40m away to the west along Hewett Avenue. This separation would exceed the Fields In Trust (FiT) Guidance (Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play) (FiT was formerly The National Playing Fields Association, the NPFA) minimum recommended buffer distance to dwellings of 20m for Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) as is proposed. The play area would also be located further away from nearby residential dwellings than the existing tennis courts and pavilion as well as the permitted new school. The separation distance to surrounding properties is such that officers do not consider the relocated play area would introduce and any unacceptable noise impacts. RBC Environmental Protection Officers raise no objection to the relocation of the children's play area.
- 6.60 A further relevant consideration is the impact of the proposed lighting columns upon surrounding residential occupiers in terms of light spillage and glare. The majority of the lighting columns would be located centrally within the playing field a significant distance from the surrounding residential properties and would not have any harmful impact on neighbour amenity. The lighting columns would extend along the new central avenue to where it connects would connect with Chazey Road in the south of the site and it is here where the columns would project closest to residential dwellings. A lux (light spillage) assessment of the light spread of the lighting in this part of the site has been provided as part of the application. The Institute of Lighting Professionals: Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (ref. GN01:2011) advises that light trespass into windows should not exceed 10lux in suburban locations (such as the application site) beyond 11pm at night. As set out earlier in this report, the lighting would be controlled and conditioned to switch off at 10pm each evening. The lux assessment information submitted indicates that the light spillage to the adjacent properties either side of the access way to MPF from Chazey Road would not exceed 10lux to windows nor within the garden areas of these properties. Furthermore, the LED lamps would include a shield to reduce glare and direct light downwards to the footpath. Based upon the information submitted, Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that the proposed lighting would be within reasonable limits for a suburban location such as to not result in any harmful light pollution to surrounding occupiers.

- 6.61 Whilst the proposed landscaping works would the enhance accessibility into the MPF site and improve the quality of existing leisure and recreation facilities on offer there is no indication that that impacts in terms of level of use of the site or vehicle movements and parking on roads in the surrounding area would be severe enough to produce a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of nearby residential occupiers in terms of noise, disturbance or air pollution.
- 6.62 Officers are satisfied that the landscaping proposals would not result in any detrimental impacts upon the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers and accord with Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document and Policy C34 of the Core Strategy.

Transport Impacts

- 6.63 Policies DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015 and CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.
- 6.64 The RBC Transport Development Control Manager states that the proposals are for landscaping works and re-profiling of the existing playing fields only and therefore raises no objection to the principle of the development. He notes that the number of pitches proposed is the same as the existing permitted level of provision and therefore the current usage would not be materially different.
- 6.65 The proposed central avenue pathway access which runs north south across the centre of the playing fields would provide pedestrian and cycle facilities for users of the playing fields and is considered to be an improvement above the existing situation. The central avenue path connects to the entrance to the playing fields on Chazey Road which is an existing pedestrian / service entrance to the playing fields and therefore is considered acceptable.
- 6.66 The RBC Transport Development Control Manager also notes that the application documents refer to a small overflow car park area (6 spaces) located to the north of the proposed school however no details have been provided on the car park layout and access. The approved car parking layout for the Mapledurham playing field car park also includes two car parking spaces which would obstruct access to this land any loss of this parking would therefore need to be re-provided for as part of any proposal. It is considered reasonable for details of this to be dealt with by way of a suitably worded condition.
- 6.67 The proposals include provision of a service and emergency vehicle access from the community car park to the top of the playing fields. It is considered necessary to secure details of the specification and surfacing of this access by way of suitably worded condition.
- 6.68 A condition is also recommended to secure a construction method statement.
- 6.69 The proposed landscaping works are considered acceptable in transport terms and to accord with Policy DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document and Policies CS20 and CS24 of Core Strategy.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.70 Policy CS35 (Flooding) seeks that planning permission is not granted for development that would increase the risk of flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been submitted with the application, as required for all Major planning applications. The site is within Flood Zone 1, with a low risk of flooding. All new surfaces proposed as part of

the landscaping works would either be permeable or turf (grass), whilst the proposed removal of the basketball court would remove 650m² of impermeable surface from MPF and replace this with turf. The proposals are not considered to result in an increased risk of flooding and would accord with Policy CS35 of the Core Strategy.

- 6.71 In terms of drainage arrangements the soakaway system proposed to the playing pitches in the eastern part of the playing fields is discussed earlier in this report. The drainage arrangements have been reviewed by the RBC Flood Authority via the Council's SUDS Manager and are considered to be acceptable.

Archaeology

- 6.72 Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) seeks that development respects areas and features of historic importance including archaeology.
- 6.73 An archaeological investigation of the wider playing field site was undertaken as part of the recent planning application for the new school. A copy of the Archaeological Evaluation report is included as part of this application. This sets out that an early Roman enclosure was found in the Western side of the Playing Fields. This has helped inform the landscape design and as a result the intrusive works and in particular sports pitch drainage improvements are focused on the Eastern side of the playing fields to prevent disturbance of archaeological remains in the area identified. Berkshire Archaeology raises no objection to the proposals, subject to a condition to secure a brief mitigation scheme for protection of areas of the site excluded from groundworks during and after construction works. Subject to this condition the proposals are considered to accord with Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy.

Equality Act

- 6.74 In determining this application, the Committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Other issues from objectors

- 6.75 The proposed landscaping works have attracted a significant number of objections. This report has attempted to cover the range of issues raised. An update report will capture any outstanding matters.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed landscaping works are considered to result in an enhancement to the Mapledurham Playing Fields open space, notably from enhanced accessibility, sports pitch provision, play facilities, tree planting and habitat improvements. The proposals are considered to be acceptable in the context of the national and local planning policy and other material considerations as set out in this report. It is recommended to grant full planning permission. The proposals are considered to be an enhancement of the MPF and that the proposals would not be detrimental to the use and enjoyment of the playing fields by the public.

Case officer: Matt Burns

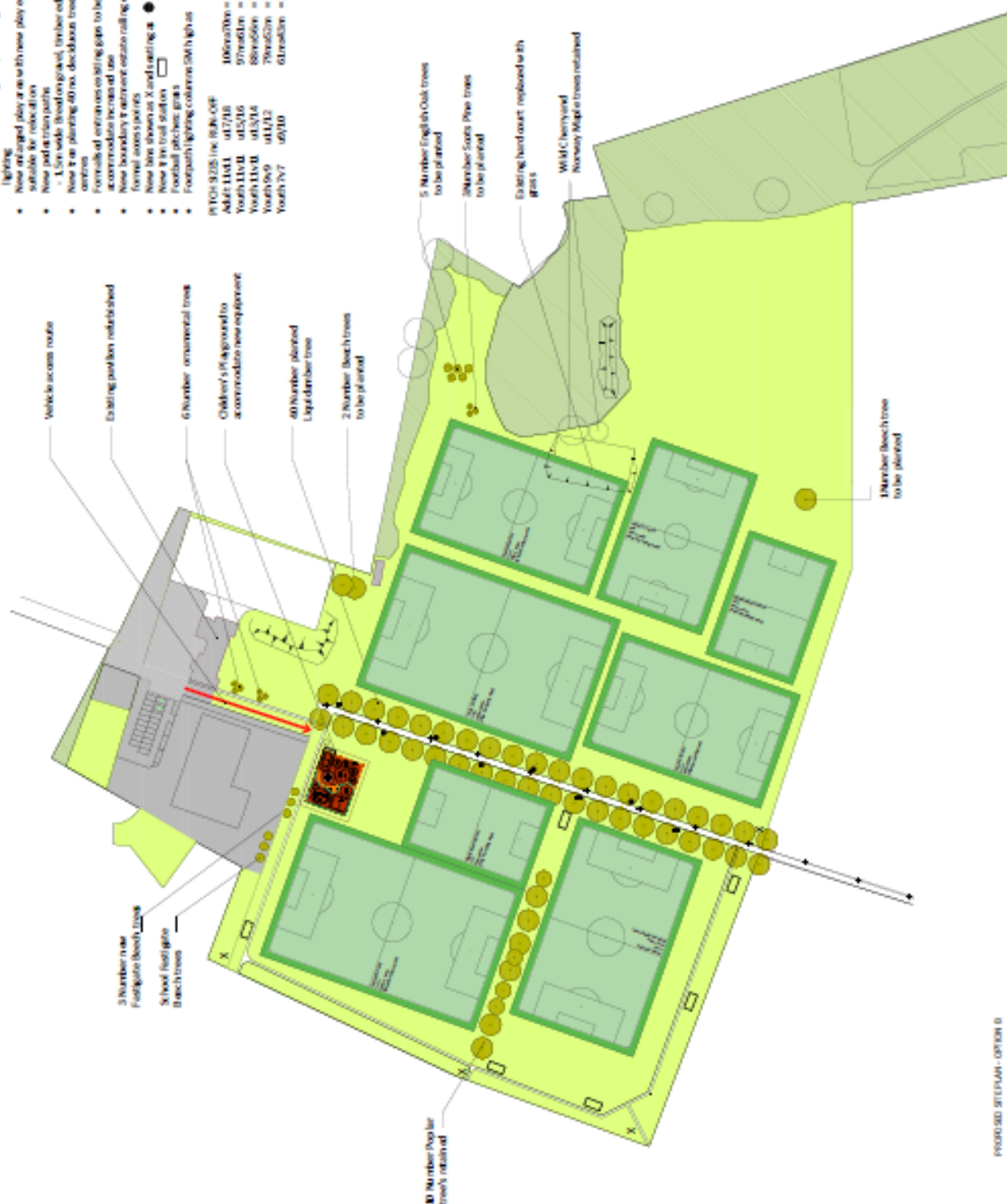
Proposed Landscape Masterplan

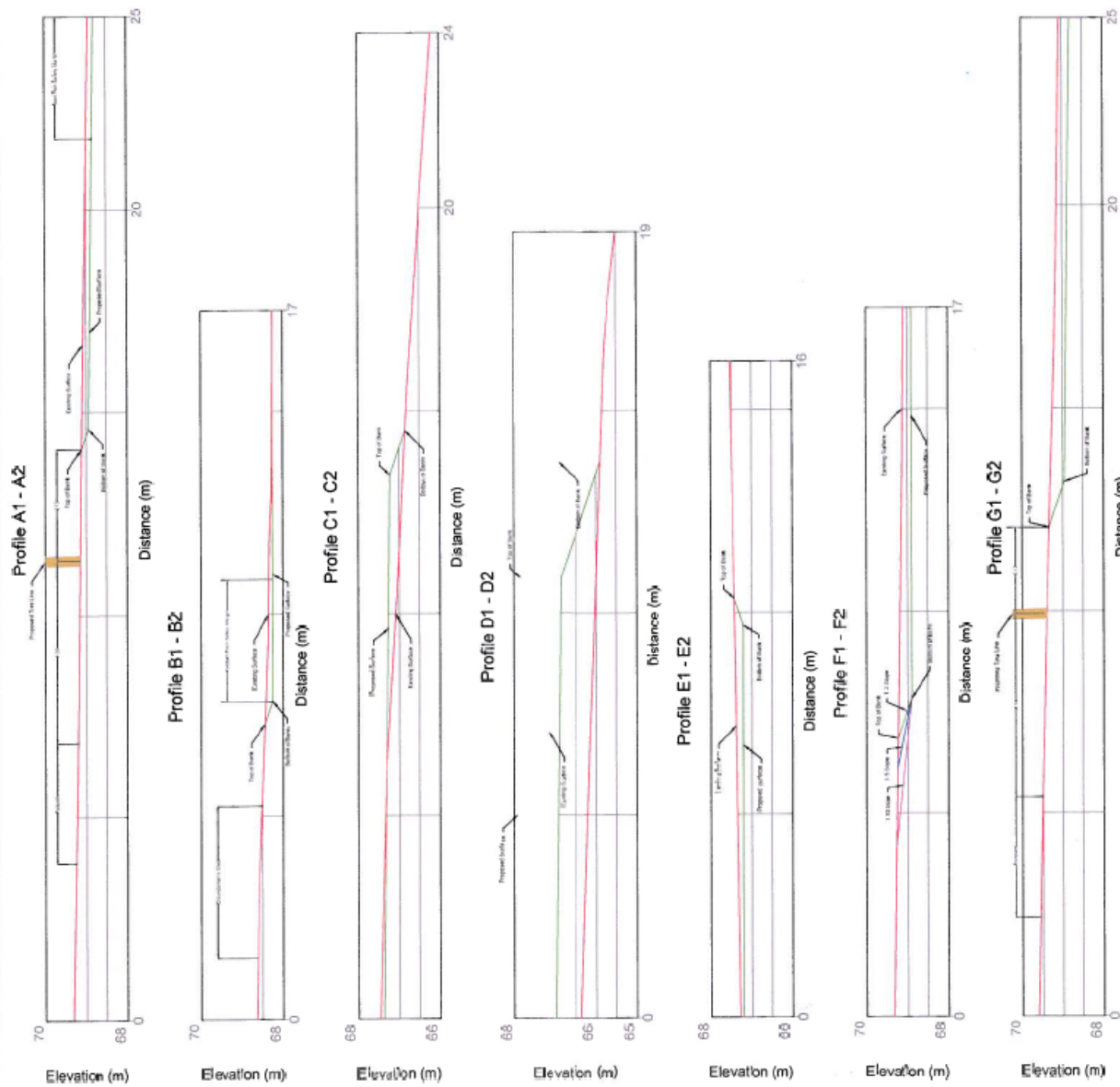
OPTION B - REFURBISH EXISTING PAWLTON

- General parking - tarmac and line marked
- School site with school staff parking
- Existing pavilion refurbished
- New path to main and cycle route to
- 3m wide breasted gravel, steel edged path, vehicle grades oblique, lighting
- New angled play area with new play equipment, an existing net suitable for rehabilitation
- New path to main paths
- 3m wide breasted gravel, timber edged path pedestrian grade
- New tree planting along ditch/bottom track in path 2m apart @ 15m
- Formalised entrance existing gate to be hard surfaced to accommodate new use
- New boundary treatment estate rolling or chain link to limit children to formal access points
- New line down an X and existing as
- New 3m trial station
- Football pitches: 6 pitches
- Football lighting columns 3M high as

PITCH SIZES (m) (G.A. OFF)

Adult 11v11	107x71.8	10m x 70m = 2 pitches
Youth 11v11	97x61.6	97m x 61m = 1 pitch
Youth 11v11	88x61.6	88m x 61m = 2 pitches
Youth 9v9	79x61.2	79m x 61m = 1 pitch
Youth 7v7	61x10	61m x 10m = 2 pitches





Proposed Site Cross Sections



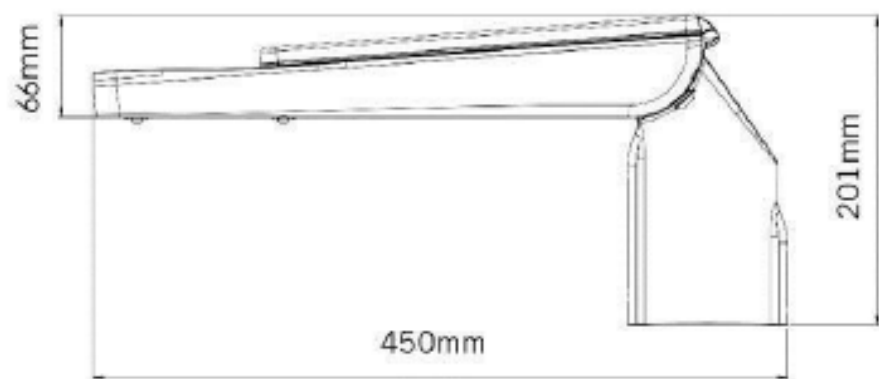
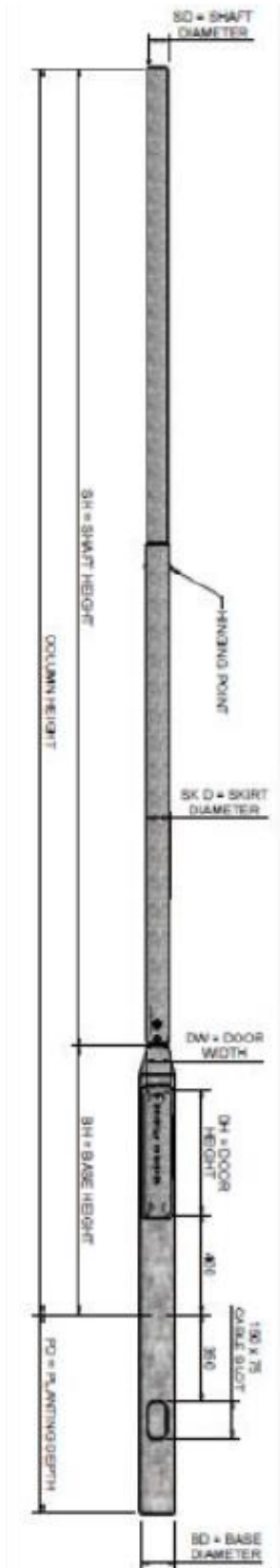
Proposed Drainage Plan



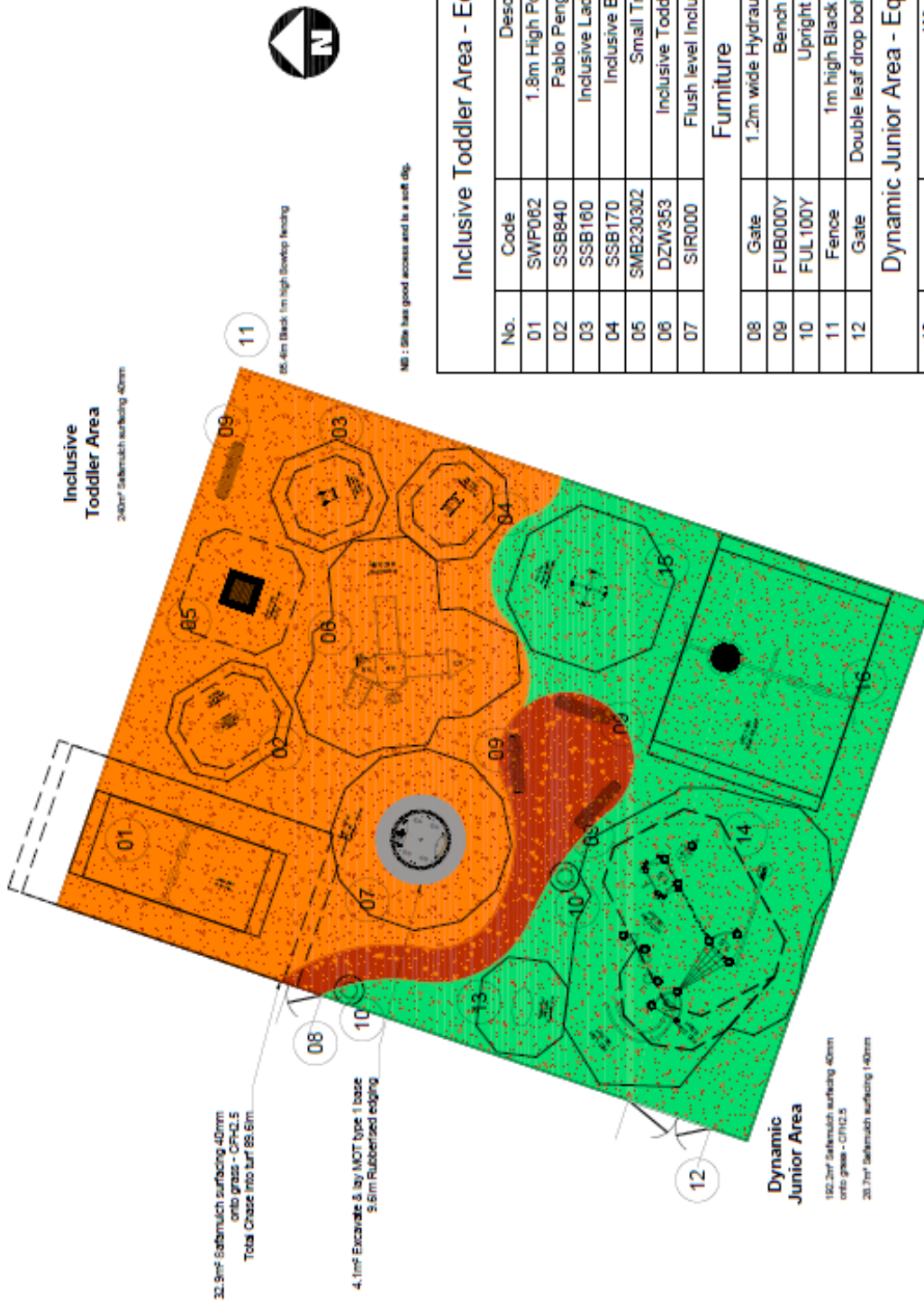
Visual of proposed lamp posts from Chazey Road



Visual of proposed lamp posts from MPF towards Chazey Road



Proposed lamp column and lamp head elevations



Inclusive Toddler Area - Equipment		
No.	Code	Description
01	SWP062	1.8m High Pod Seat Swing
02	SSB840	Pablo Penguin Seesaw
03	SSB160	Inclusive Ladybird Springie
04	SSB170	Inclusive Bee Springie
05	SMB230302	Small Trampoline
06	DZW353	Inclusive Toddlerzone Pull-Up
07	SIR000	Flush level Inclusive Roundabout
Furniture		
08	Gate	1.2m wide Hydraulic Pedestrian Gate
09	FUB000Y	Bench seat x 4
10	FUL100Y	Upright Litter Bin
11	Fence	1m high Black Bowtop fencing
12	Gate	Double leaf drop bolt, lockable combi gate
Dynamic Junior Area - Equipment		
13	SWD450	Wipe Out
14	CZU212	Mission Foxfire
15	SWD350	Dynamic Quad Flyer
16	SBN085	2.4m high Inclusive Rubber Nest Swing with 2 x Bumper seats

Proposed children's play area layout plan



JPS15A-S

Senior Parallel Bars



JPS13A-S

Senior Abs Bench



JPS19A-S

Senior Wooden Pull Up Bars



JPS21A-S

Senior Monkey Bars

Proposed trim trail equipment



JPS17A-S

Senior Jumping Bar



JPS18A-S

Senior Push Ups



Earth Anchor Forest Seat

Proposed trim trail equipment and bench



Earth Anchor Bin