

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO.13

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3rd 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 application valid: 18th February 2019

Major Application 13 week target: 20th May 2019

RECOMMENDATION:

GRANT planning permission, subject to the conditions on the main agenda report and with an additional condition to ensure the re-profiled sports pitches are constructed to Sport England standards prior to their first use.

1 SPORT ENGLAND

- 1.1 The recommendation is no longer subject to notification of the application to the Secretary of State (via the National Planning Casework Unit) following Sports England's withdrawal of their objection to the application.
- 1.2 Following provision of further information from the applicant detailing the proposed works to the playing fields, Sport England has withdrawn their objection to the application following their own discussions with the Football Foundation/Football Association.
- 1.3 Sport England therefore supports the Council's proposed playing fields improvements, which are necessary following the loss of playing fields to accommodate the new Heights School building. It is considered that the proposed improvements meet Exception 4 of Sports England's Playing Fields Policy in 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.'*

- 1.4 Sport England recommends a condition to secure implementation of the playing pitch enhancements in accordance the standards set out within Sport England's *Natural Turf for Sport* document (2011) prior to first use of the pitches. Officers are satisfied that this condition is reasonable and will ensure the sports terrace area of re-profiled and drained pitches will be provided to Sport England standards.
- 1.5 Following Sport England's withdrawal of their objection it would no longer be necessary to refer the application to the Secretary of State if planning permission were to be granted.

2 FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED (AND RESPONSES WHERE NECESSARY)

- 2.1 In addition to those set out in the main agenda report a further 9 objections to the application have been received.
- 2.2 Any new points raised which are not included in the main agenda report are set out below: (officer comments in italics):
- The re-grading and drainage works to the eastern part of the playing fields will interfere with the badger setts (*Officer Comment: A condition is recommended to require a badger sett survey to be undertaken prior to commencement of works*)
 - Trees should be planted to the open space to the west of the new school to screen this building (*Officer Comment: This land does not form part of the application area. A tree screen is proposed to the south of the MUGA within the new school site to providing screening to the playing fields*)
 - The verge to Hewett Avenue should be protected by bollards to prevent this area becoming muddy and rutted from increased parking (*Officer Comment: The landscaping works are not considered to result in a significant intensification of the use of MPF in terms of vehicular movements*)
 - Trees to provide shade and benches should be provided for the playground (*Officer Comment: benches are provided in the shade along the planting avenue*)
 - Under the community use agreement and due to loss of parking from the school development the school's car park must be made available to MPF users on Saturdays and Sundays and during community and private events outside of school hours (*Officer Comment: This is not relevant to this landscaping works application, but permission 182200/VARIAT includes use of the staff car park outside school hours for community use*)
 - Use of the trim tail gym equipment in early morning or late evenings could be a noise nuisance to local residents (*Officer Comment: There are no officer concerns in respect of noise impact of the equipment. There is currently unrestricted public access to the playing fields.*)
 - The central footpath results in a loss of an additional acre of open space above the two acres lost already by the new school (*Officer Comments: This is a standalone planning application and does not include the school site. The*

landscaping works proposed do not propose to remove open space - the footpath is still part of the open space)

- The central footpath reduces the flexibility of the configuration of the pitches and run-off areas as noted by Sport England and the Caversham Trent's Football Club (*Officer Comment: Sport England, in consultation with the Football Foundation/Football Association have withdrawn their objection on these issues*)
- The benefits of the central avenue have been overestimated - very few foot journeys are made across MPF as noted by WADRA (*Officer Comments: this is not the advice of the Council's Leisure Service*)
- There is no clear indication of the cost of the proposed central avenue (*Officer comment: this is not a relevant planning consideration. This is in part covered by the s106 contribution from the school application*)
- RBC is not able to maintain current facilities; providing more facilities will not improve this situation (*Officer comment: opinion noted - this is not relevant to determination of this application*)
- Survey of WADRA members and neighbours indicates 93% of neighbour support removal of the central avenue (*Officer comment: Noted, the layout has been agreed by the MPF Trust Sub Committee who manages the MPF on behalf of the Mapledurham community*)
- Concerns about the impact of works to the access road to the community car park from Upper Woodcote Road on adjacent dwellings (*Officer comment: works to this access are not proposed as part of this application which is not within the red line application area*)

Case Officer: Matt Burns