

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/23/95045

Site Address: THE WIDE LANE PAVILION, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
SPORTS GROUND, WIDE LANE, EASTLEIGH, SO50 5PE

Case Officer: Rachael Morris

Description: Installation of 2no. synthetic sports pitches, erection of fencing including new pedestrian access route, associated engineering operations and landscaping

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Aviation Safeguarding • Wider site is partial within flood zone 2 • Open Space • Countryside • Settlement Gap • HCC Minerals Safeguarding • Tree Preservation Order(s)		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Z/29361/000/00 - Outline: Retail and Leisure Developments (23,225 sq. m) – Refuse – Jul 1987 • Z/29362/000/00 - Outline: Retail and Leisure Developments (37,160 sq. m.) – Refuse – Jul 1987 • Z/11560/002/00 - Erection of sports club & changing rooms – Refuse – Sept 1975 • Z/04511/003/00 - new access road to sports ground - replacement of existing access – Permit – Jul 1980 • Z/08767/016/00 - Retention of Changing Rooms, Toilets and Groundsman Store – Temporarily approve – Aug 1986 • Z/08767/020/00 - Outline: Development of University Campus – Refuse – Mar 1992 • Z/08767/024/00 - Siting of 3no. Temporary Office Buildings, 2no. Generators, 1no. Water Irrigation Tank, Automatic Barrier Entry System and Flood Lighting - Temporarily approve – Jun 2003 • Z/08767/025/00 - Construction of 2no. Synthetic turf pitches with fencing and floodlighting, 8no. Tennis courts with fencing and floodlighting, remodelling of car park to accommodate 240 cars and 5 coaches, erection of new pavilion and steward's living accommodation – Permit – Oct 2003 • X/05/54885 - Part relief of conditions No.35 and No.27 of planning permission 08767/025 to allow the use of 100 parking spaces for BAA staff - Temporarily approve – Oct 2005 • A/14/75683 - Display of 1no. Non illuminated dual aspect 'V' free standing sign following removal of existing – Consent to advert display – Feb 2015		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☒
Representations:	35 Longster Road. Objection. Already very busy road, this will only cause more congestion and pollution.		
Parish Council:	No Objection		
Eastleigh Leisure Services:	It is worth noting that Eastleigh Borough Council have recently commissioned the development of a new Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The emerging PPS will have undertaken a thorough assessment of local needs, accounting for the changes in pitch provision since the last assessment and fully considering the need for new facilities to meet local demand and future population growth. The applicant should be aware of emerging strategic priorities from the		

	new PPS and take these into account when planning for new sports provision. This project has not been identified in the Football Foundation's Local Football Facilities Plan which highlights areas where strategic need is greatest and is therefore not deemed as a priority need by the national governing body (NGB) for football. There is no evidence of community consultation or engagement with NGB's to determine the need for this project. The type and intensity of use will impact upon ancillary facilities such as changing and parking provision. Due to the nature of artificial pitches, their carrying capacity is significantly higher than grass pitches, therefore it would be expected that the number of training sessions and matches will also increase, especially with the addition of floodlights. It is likely that there will be increased demand for parking at peak times. A traffic management plan has not been provided to assess whether there is an acceptable level of existing parking provision onsite. The demand for parking should be considered when facilities are at maximum capacity. It is noted that the number of parking spaces is not proposed to increase, although the usage capacity will significantly increase with an additional two 3G pitches. It is suggested that traffic management and parking provision detail should be provided to enable the determination of this application. The 2017 PPS identified that the University should continue to explore options to secure overspill carparking at peak times for community use. Additionally, the PPS identified that the sand dressed hockey pitch would require resurfacing within 3 years. There were no recommendations for additional artificial grass pitches at Wide Lane, however as mentioned it is expected that the new PPS will provide an up to date and robust evidence of need. It is recommended that new formal sports facilities should cater for local community need and therefore include provision for secured community use in line with Sport England guidance. It is recognised that the provision of new sports facilities can help to increase usage and physical activity opportunities whilst helping to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes. This would be encouraged and consultation with potential users and National Governing Bodies would help to establish the projected use of the facilities. As this information is currently unavailable, I am unable to comment on how this proposal would impact local policy and strategies.
Eastleigh Planning Policy:	The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 was adopted in April 2022. This document now forms the planning policy framework for the borough until 2036. Policy DM34 in the adopted Local Plan supports the provision of new recreation and open space facilities or uses, and enhancements to existing, providing they meet the criteria in the policy. In addition to general development criteria, these address the impact on the countryside; the management of the space; and transport and accessibility. The site is in the countryside and within the settlement gap between Eastleigh and Southampton. In accordance with policy DM34(b)ii, development should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character. This

	application does not include any floodlighting or new buildings. Due to the colour and nature of the proposed mesh security and pitch fencing, it is not considered that it will have an urbanising effect. The two proposed artificial pitches will replace three existing grass playing pitches. Policy DM32 sets out exceptional circumstances where the loss of facilities may be permitted, including where the need for alternative facilities outweighs the loss (criterion 1c). In accordance with policy DM32, if there is a loss in the number or area of pitches, the application should demonstrate that there is a clear benefit in the increased capacity of the artificial pitches, and this outweighs any loss. While the application does not provide detailed information on the use of the artificial pitches, it is recognised that there is a problem with waterlogging on grass pitches. Artificial pitches will support year-operation and are likely to result in increased capacity despite the loss of one pitch. In conclusion, this proposal is acceptable based on the lack of urbanising effect and increased capacity of the artificial pitches.
Eastleigh Tree Officer:	During pre-app. discussions, we noted the following: 1. We have no arboricultural objection in principle to the change in surfacing of the two pitches, and addition of lighting and fencing (subject to clarification on several matters – see point 3, below). 2. We would request a tree protection plan for this work, showing a construction exclusion zone, due to the potential risk of construction access and activities in close proximity to Root Protection Areas (RPAs). 3. However, there is an unknown regarding the location of a new soakaway, which must be identified in any full planning application because excavation of this element (inc. pipework) may have an impact upon retained tree RPAs. The same is true of cabling for new floodlights. The submitted arboricultural report is satisfactory in alleviating concerns regarding point 2. Point 3 refers to drainage and it appears that drainage is to be positioned under the pitches. We will defer to the Ecologist on this, but if the proposal is suitable then it is outside of the RPAs. An additional concern was the installation of the fencing, but this is to be carried out under arboricultural supervision, which mitigates the risk. Ultimately, we raise no arboricultural objection, subject to a condition.
Eastleigh Ecology:	<u>Ecology</u> The wider Wide Lane site is comprised of predominantly of modified grassland in the form of the existing sports pitches. The remainder is made up of existing buildings with higher value habitat (broad-leaved woodland) around the perimeter of the site, which includes the wooded Monks Brook corridor along the western boundary. There are also two lines of trees comprised of poplars and birches. The proposal will result in the loss of existing modified grassland (sports pitches) and two trees. The direct impacts from the proposals are considered to be of low ecological significance. The only implications for protected species arising from the present application is the potential for impacts on bat roosts and/or nesting birds as a resulting from the removal of the two trees. Precautionary mitigation is recommended in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which I support. Although the proposals almost entirely impact only modified grassland this still represents a loss of habitat when considering the need for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as outlined in the NPPF and Policy DM11

	of the Eastleigh Local Plan. The submitted net gain calculations show an uplift of around 11% due to the provision within the landscaping of areas of more diverse grassland around the perimeter of the site (as shown on the Landscaping drawings). <u>Drainage</u> The site slopes towards Monks Brook from the northeast to southwest so any existing surface water and ground water will enter the brook and eventually the River Itchen SAC/SSSI further south. The existing football and rugby pitches have a series of filter drains installed beneath the surface. The proposed artificial pitches will be located partially across these two existing pitches and the Drainage report indicates that the existing drains could be used or additional added if required. Ultimately the artificial pitches and footpaths around the edge are permeable and the strategy notes that "Surface water will infiltrate within the site boundary with a series of filter drains installed beneath the pitch build up. These will be designed to accommodate storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year event + 40% allowance for climate change." Given the proximity of the Monks Brook and the existing fluvial regime it is important that no chemicals are used in the maintenance of the artificial pitches (e.g. the application of Algaecide to prevent Moss, Algae and weed growth). Control and maintenance of this should be undertaken manually (drag brushing, sweeping etc). <u>Summary</u> I have no objection to the proposals as submitted subject to the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (John Wenman, March 2023) being implemented in full as a condition of any permission and delivery of the biodiversity enhancements as shown in the Landscape Drawings and discussed in the Biodiversity Gain Assessment.
Natural England:	No Objection. Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.
Hampshire Highways:	In regard to application F/23/95045, having reviewed the information contained within the application pack, there is no objection to the proposals from a highway perspective. Access in and out of the site onto the highway is unchanged, and the site is in a sustainable location in terms of walking, cycle, bus and train options, as well as that of motorised vehicle use which is catered for in the on site car park. The use itself is a pre-existing use, with the conversion of existing grass pitches to synthetic pitches a simple betterment of existing facilities, rather than a new trip generator. The TMP has been reviewed, and this serves to re-iterate and confirm the initial highways consultation response, in that there is no objection to the proposals from a highway perspective.
Hampshire Archaeology:	The amendments to the DBA goes some way to address the concerns I expressed in my original consultation response. Although the discussion regarding the site's geology with regards to the existing borehole data still requires a little refinement, the overall argument and conclusion presented (especially with regards to the previous impacts of existing drainage) is sound. The natural geology for the site is represented by superficial geology and bedrock geology. The superficial geology is 'River Terrace Deposits 1 – Sand and Gravel', which overlies bedrock geology of 'London Clay Formation – Clay, Silt and Sand' (BGS 2023). The bedrock geology was formed between 56 and 47.8 million years ago.

	The superficial geology has formed more recently through sedimentary processes (formed over the last 2.5 million years). In this landscape, we would anticipate that the superficial deposits would represent the archaeological horizon for remains dating to at least the later prehistoric period and possibly earlier. The borehole data referred to in the DBA is not clear in differentiating between topsoil and superficial geology but seems to imply that they are both mixed, possibly indicating some level of previous disturbance. Whilst this is not absolutely clear, when taken together with the evidence of known previous impact caused by the installation of existing drainage, it suggests that the site's archaeological potential has been compromised. Although the existing drainage does not cover the whole proposed development area, any area of new impact would be relatively limited. Whilst it is not possible to completely rule out the possibility that archaeological remains could survive, the relatively low potential for archaeology and potentially compromised nature of the archaeological potential suggest that, on balance, the imposition of an archaeological condition would not be justified under the terms NPPF. On this basis, I do not wish to raise any archaeological issues.
Hampshire Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA):	The site is within Flood Zone 1 and the pitches are to be designed to reuse the existing pitch drainage or utilise a new drainage system that would drain the pitches with no increase in runoff from the existing situation. Filter drains are proposed to ensure that runoff from the pitches can be contained on-site, however the infiltration rates proposed are unlikely to be realistic for this area. Despite this, the installation of the pitches and drainage should not increase the risk of flooding here, due to the nature of the proposals. Therefore, the LLFA has no objection to this application.
Sport England:	It is conceivable that there is sufficient demand from across university and community rugby; football and other pitch sports to generate the requirement for the additional 2no. Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) with some spare capacity to absorb additional demand potentially from community use. Sport England would have expected greater engagement with community groups and clubs as well as national governing bodies to test and consider whether the proposal would have wider community benefits to meet existing and future community needs, and we consider this element of the proposal could benefit from further discussion. The new Playing Pitch Strategy currently in development should help to inform these considerations. The lack of certainty in respect of the sports lighting is far from ideal and we consider the benefits to sport from the AGP developments are reduced as a result. Temporary; portable lighting cannot be secured as part of the planning process. Their use is likely to restrict the potential use of the facilities for university and community matches and serious training during the winter months and/or evenings. The proposal will compromise the ability to bring the 3rd cricket square back into use at a future point in time if required. However, we note that there has been investment into the remaining 2no. natural turf squares to provide NTPs as a result of taking the 3rd square out of use and these benefit from secure albeit time limited community use agreements. We would like these community benefits secured in perpetuity through their inclusion in a community use agreement. The option to bring the 'Island site' square back into use also remains if required. Noting the significant use of the site by the community is varied and includes a range of matches/training/camps/programmes etc across the range of pitches and facilities, Sport England considers that a community use agreement is justified. We would therefore ask for this agreement to be secured by condition.

	Given there is still some uncertainty about the specification and design of the AGPs and their compliance with governing body guidance/standards, we would also ask for a condition which requires more details to be submitted. This will ensure the potential for community use is maximised and that it can support match play. This is subject to conditions but without these conditions or a variation of them, we would not consider the application is capable of meeting our E5 exception and we would wish to raise an objection to the application.
National Highways:	Referring to the consultation on a planning application, in the vicinity of the M27 that form part of the Strategic Road Network, notice is hereby given that National Highways' formal recommendation is that we offer no objection. Highways Act 1980 Section 175B is not relevant to this application.
Environment Agency:	No comment
Southampton Airport:	No comment

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 06/03/2023		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The <u>Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036</u> The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1 and S2; and Development Management policies DM1, DM2, DM11 and DM14. Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:
<u>Site location</u> - Wide Lane is a multi-sport site with provision for a variety of sports including football, cricket, rugby, hockey, netball and tennis. The existing facility mix includes 2no. floodlit artificial grass pitches (1 3G and 1 sand based) and 8 floodlit tennis courts. - The site caters predominantly for student usage from the University of Southampton (UoS), however there is also a mix of community use, with local clubs and organisations benefiting from the onsite facilities. In addition to the external facilities, there is a clubhouse with changing provision. - Funding was provided by EBC and the Football Foundation in 2005 to enhance the quality of the clubhouse. This was aligned to a 20-year agreement to develop community sport at Wide Lane. Additionally, in 2020 EBC made available further investment to install 2no. non-turf cricket wickets. This funding was aligned to an 8-year agreement to make cricket pitches available for community use. <u>Policy and principle</u> - The site lies within open space, countryside and local gap, as identified in the adopted 2016-2036 Eastleigh Borough Local Plan. While assessing this scheme, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Eastleigh Borough

Council Sports Facilities Needs Assessment & Playing Pitch Strategy Update (2017) (PPS) has also been referred to.

- Key policies taken from the adopted local plan in the determination of this application are:
 - Policy S1, Delivering sustainable development
 - Policy S5, New development in the countryside
 - Policy S6, Protection of settlement gaps
 - Policy DM1, General criteria for new development
 - Policy DM6, Sustainable surface water management and watercourse management
 - Policy DM11, Nature Conservation
 - DM13, General development criteria – transport
 - DM14, Parking
 - DM32, Protection of recreation and open space facilities
 - DM34, New and enhanced recreation and open space facilities
- Paragraphs 98 and 99 in the National Planning Policy Framework reference open space and recreation. “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”

Proposed development

- The site is in the countryside and within the settlement gap between Eastleigh and Southampton.
- Policy DM34 in the adopted Local Plan supports the provision of new recreation and open space facilities or uses, and enhancements to existing, providing they meet the criteria in the policy. In accordance with policy DM34, development should not involve structures and floodlighting that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character. This application does not include the provision of floodlighting which will reduce potential for an urbanising feature. The only notable structure proposed in this application is some fencing which is to surround the proposed synthetic pitches at a height of 5m and some additional security fencing at the entrance by Wide Lane (A335). This is as you would expect within the character of the proposal site which is for sports pitches.
- Policy DM32 sets out exceptional circumstances where the loss of facilities may be permitted, including where the need for alternative facilities outweighs the loss (criterion 1c). In addition, when it can be demonstrated that the loss would be replaced by a betterment to provision.
- The 2017 PPS identified that the University should continue to explore options to secure overspill carparking at peak times for community use. Additionally, the PPS identified that the sand dressed hockey pitch would require resurfacing within 3 years. There were no recommendations for additional artificial grass pitches at Wide Lane, however as mentioned it is expected that the new PPS will provide an up to date and robust evidence of need. Since the Playing Pitch Strategy publication in 2017, a number of AGP projects have come to fruition, all with community use. This includes the triple (parklife) AGP site at Stoneham Lane/Monksbrook as well as new football AGPs at Deer Park secondary school and Wyvern College/school. In total, 5 new full-size football 3G AGPs have come forward since the 2017 PPS was published.

- A key principle from Sport England is to “Protect and promote existing sport and physical activity provision and ensure new development does not prejudice its use” but it should also “Recognise and give significant weight to the benefits of sport and physical activity”. There was an objection from Sport England regarding the loss of the existing sport provision within the site in which more information was required.
- The current 9.no turf pitches would be used for a 6 MES (Match Equivalent Session) per pitch per week when infrequent one-off bookings are factored in as well as usage for other sports e.g. lacrosse and ultimate frisbee. This amounts to significant overplay of the natural turf pitches.
- The proposed AGP (Artificial Grass Pitch) pitches would result in an increase carrying capacity on site and overall result in more use of facilities. There is an existing demand for the site which currently sees one external rugby club and ten University rugby teams alongside two external football clubs and forty-one University football teams using the facilities. As existing the facility cannot accommodate all users, notwithstanding that there is also a community demand too.
- With the retention of the 7 remaining natural turf football pitches (i.e. the proposal results in the loss of 2no. natural turf football pitches), then it could be considered there to be sufficient demand to justify a football only AGP with some capacity for additional community use.
- It is anticipated that the dual use 3G AGP will soak up the training demand enabling the remaining 3 natural turf rugby pitches (one rugby pitch will be lost to the proposal) to be retained and maintained for match play.
- The proposal will compromise the ability to mark out and use the cricket pitch in the northwest section of the playing field. While this cricket pitch is not in current use by either the community or the university it has not been out of use for a significant period. It may be required in the future. The university has the potential to bring the ‘Island site’ to the south back into use for cricket if future demand or need requires. In addition, there is a Service Level Agreement up until 2028 between the University and the Council which relates to investment in non-turf pitches at the two remaining cricket squares and the obligation on the University to make these facilities accessible to the community.
- The application needs to adhere to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 98 and 99, especially when assessing the mitigation for the loss of open space. It is recognised that the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. This also accords with policy DM32 within the Local Plan.
- The proposed use would not be detrimentally impacted by the existing surrounding uses from a safety perspective, such as through a cricket ball strike, due to the proposed fencing that will surround the AGP pitches.
- This application does not include the provision of floodlighting and as such is not assessed here however it’s absence and the lack of certainty surrounding its delivery which is subject to a further planning application and ecological surveys must be noted. Nonetheless, there are diesel generated floodlighting currently on site which could be used for the undisclosed period while this floodlighting is absent. Although it is not an ideal situation due to the environmental implications a diesel generator creates.

- Although set within the countryside, the urbanising impact this development proposes is not to a detrimental extent and is mostly limited to fencing which is currently already seen within the site and accords with the site's character. The proposed artificial pitches would not create an unacceptably urbanising impact and would not undermine the visual openness of the strategic gap.

Access to site

- A Transport Management Plan (TMP) was submitted in support of this application which detailed how this site is capable of providing suitable access for the proposed development. The below statements are from this submitted TMP which has received support from Hampshire Highways.
- The site is bordered by The National Cycle Network route 23 which runs along the eastern and northern perimeter of Wide Lane Sports Ground. This Route 23 stretches from Reading to Southampton, passing through Basingstoke, Alresford, Winchester and Eastleigh. The UoS Highfield Campus, City Gateway and Wessex Lane university halls of residence are all reachable within a 20-minute cycle. Additionally, cyclists can access Southampton City Centre within a 30-minute cycle from the site.
- Bus services are detailed in the Traffic Management Plan and highlights that there are 7 bus stops within a 10-minute walk from the site, accessing Boorley Park, multiple areas of Southampton, West End and Eastleigh, with further connections available from there.
- Moreover, with Southampton Airport Parkway Train Station located within a 5-minute walk, there are a multitude of locations available by rail.
- Two-way internal circulatory routes provide access to 244 car parking spaces located across three car parking areas. This includes 14 disabled spaces which are located adjacent to the frontage of the Wide Lane pavilion and gym. Also, as an alternative to the on-site parking, visitors can use other car parking facilities nearby. The closest car park is located at Southampton Airport Parkway station, with a capacity of 900 spaces and operates 24 hours a day.
- Regarding the proposed trip generation, as the development proposals involve the replacement of two youth and training-only football pitches, and one rugby pitch with an artificial football pitch and a combined artificial rugby and football pitch, it is not expected that this will materially alter the worst-case trip generation on site.
- No changes to the existing car parking provision of 230 standard spaces and 14 disabled spaces are proposed as part of the development proposals. This is because there will be a net loss in the number of pitches on site, and no changes to the site's existing trip generation are proposed. As such, there is not expected to be a growth in peak car parking demand, and the existing provision of 230 spaces is sufficient to serve the proposed development site.

Other material considerations

- The proposed development will provide an 11% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) within the Habitat aspect of the Defra Metric submitted with the application. This would accord with policy DM11 which requires a biodiversity net gain.

Climate Change and Equalities Implications:

Climate Change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030; (c) ensure that the Council's procurement policy recognises carbon

neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 and the supporting Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF, development plan and adopted local plan policy do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and local plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted local plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

Equalities Implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equality implications

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

Comments ...