

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/26/100816

Site Address: MACKOY/UNIVERSAL STADIUM, VT SPORTS GROUND,
PORTSMOUTH ROAD, BURSLEDON, SO19 9PW

Case Officer: Gregg Chapman

Description: 6 no. covered Padel courts, Padel centre (including Studio,
changing areas and refreshments) and associated parking and
works.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Settlement Gap • Countryside		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Z/24706/000/00 - Erection of sports pavilion to include changing rooms, bar, squash courts and steward's accommodation – Approved, November 1980. Z/24706/001/00 - Siting of Mobile Home – Temporarily Approved, April 1987. F/12/71754 - Construction of sports pavilion and cricket pavilion, all weather sports pitch with flood lighting and 3m high mesh fencing, 112 space car park with altered and widened vehicular access and drive, following demolition of existing buildings – Approved, February 2013 . F/16/79528 - Construction of new pavilion & changing rooms – Approved, February 2017. F/24/96739 - Extension to the existing cricket pavilion to provide changing facilities – Approved, May 2024. F/24/98391 - Retrospective application for a surface water drain and swale, gravel car park and semi-permanent marquee – Approved, December 2024. A/24/98558 - 3.no freestanding externally illuminated advertisement boards to the vehicular access – Consent, January 2025. F/25/98865 - Change of use to open vehicle storage (Use Class B8) from outdoor sport/recreation (Use Class F2(c)) (Retrospective) – Withdrawn, April 2025. F/26/100758 - New Head Office building to replace existing office and storage units – Approved, March 2026.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☒
Representations:	2 letters – Support • Proposal would be a recreation asset for the community • Support the community work they are involved in alongside a company supporting local youths. • They have kept to the times that entertainment finishes and as long as that remains I have no problem • They maintain traffic control when needed.		
Hound Parish Council:	No response received		

Bursledon Parish Council:	No response received
Sport England:	No objection
HCC Highways	No objection subject to clarification of the site's existing parking use (application F/25/98865) to ensure the development would not result in a loss of parking and overspill onto Portsmouth Road or nearby residential streets. If the existing parking is not required, the proposed 19 spaces would be acceptable, and also recommend cycle parking provision in accordance with EBC standards. No significant highway concerns are raised in relation to lighting spill or construction management. Case Officer note – Application F/25/98865 was withdrawn.
Southampton City Council	No comments
Southampton Airport	No response received
Environment Agency	No response received
Environmental Health	Noise – No objection Lighting – No objection Contamination – No objection Construction Environmental Management Plan – No objection
Leisure Services	No response received
Landscape	No response received
Ecology	No objection, subject to conditions
HCC LLFA	No objection, subject to conditions
Trees	No objection subject to landscaping and tree protection.

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 18/02/2026		

Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance Development Plan: The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2, S5, S6 and S9; and Development Management policies DM1, DM3, DM5, DM6, DM8, DM11, DM13, DM14, DM32 and DM34. Supplementary Planning Documents: Quality Places; Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:

Principle of Development

The application site forms part of the wider Sholing Football Club site at Universal Stadium within the designated countryside. The site also falls within a designated settlement gap.

Policy S5 (New Development in the Countryside) of the EBLP supports, amongst other things, development in the countryside for outdoor sport and recreation, provided that the proposal avoids adverse urbanising effects and conserves the character and intrinsic qualities of the landscape. Policy DM34 (New and enhanced recreation and open space facilities) similarly supports new and enhanced recreational facilities in countryside locations where the development is appropriate to the rural setting, and any associated structures are essential to the use and ancillary in nature. In addition, Strategic Policy S9 (Green infrastructure) is relevant as it seeks the provision, retention and enhancement of multi-functional green infrastructure, including interlinked publicly accessible open space and formal sports facilities. While the proposal introduces built form in the shape of canopy structures, fencing and associated works, these are directly related to the proposed recreational use and are to be read in the context of the established sporting function of the wider site, which already contains formal sports infrastructure, pavilions, parking and associated development.

The proposal would provide six covered padel tennis courts and an ancillary building with changing, refreshment and studio space, with associated parking and fencing, as an additional sporting facility at an existing sports venue. This carries weight in principle, particularly having regard to the Council's Playing Pitch and Built Leisure Facilities Strategy 2023-2036, which identifies support for the provision of padel facilities and recognises the current lack of community-accessible provision in the area. The proposal would therefore contribute positively to local sport and recreation opportunities and would also add to the site's role as part of the Borough's network of recreational green infrastructure.

Accordingly, subject to the detailed impacts of the scheme being acceptable, the principle of the development is considered to accord with Policies S5, S9 and DM34 of the EBLP.

Character, Appearance and Impact on the Countryside/Settlement Gap

The main issue arising from the site's countryside and settlement gap designation is whether the proposal would result in harmful urbanisation or otherwise erode the open character these designations seek to protect. Policies S5 and S6 of the EBLP require development to conserve the character of the countryside and maintain the physical and visual separation between settlements. Policy DM1 further requires development to respond positively to its context.

The proposed padel courts would be located within the existing sports complex and would be seen in the context of the wider stadium, associated buildings, pitches, lighting, access arrangements and parking areas already present on the site. Whilst the development would introduce additional built form, it would be read as part of an established sporting complex rather than as isolated encroachment into an otherwise undeveloped landscape. In design terms, the proposal is simple and functional, as would be expected for a covered sports facility. The curved roof over the courts, together with the flat-roofed ancillary building, gives the scheme a modern appearance, and the use of contemporary materials is appropriate within the wider sports complex. Overall, the development is utilitarian in form, but suitably designed for its purpose and setting.

The canopies would inevitably have some visual presence. However, the siting of the development within the existing sports grounds, together with the existing and proposed landscape treatment, would limit the prominence of the structures in the wider landscape.

The proposal would not materially reduce the openness or function of the settlement gap such that coalescence between settlements would occur. The development remains clearly associated with the existing recreational use of the site and would not extend built form in a manner that would fundamentally undermine the purpose of the gap designation.

The Landscape Officer raised no objection in principle at the pre-application stage and recommended native boundary planting and recessive colour finishes for the structural and fencing elements. Subject to conditions securing hard and soft landscaping and the external materials and finishes, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable visual impact and to accord with Policies S5, S6, DM1 and DM34 of the EBLP.

Residential Amenity

Policy DM1 of the EBLP requires development not to have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, and Policy DM8 of the EBLP seeks to protect against unacceptable noise, disturbance and other forms of pollution.

The nearest residential properties are separated from the application site by the wider stadium complex, intervening land and vegetation. Notwithstanding this, padel is a use which can give rise to distinctive impulsive noise and activity, particularly during evening periods, and it is therefore necessary to consider the impact of the courts on nearby occupiers.

The application has been supported by acoustic information which has been reviewed by the Environmental Health Officer. Subject to the recommended controls, including limitation of hours of use and any necessary mitigation measures, the proposal is not considered likely to give rise to unacceptable noise impacts. The hours of operation are also compatible with the established sporting use of the wider site.

With regard to lighting, details of the lighting scheme and light spill have been provided and assessed. The Environmental Health Officer has no objection to these details.

Subject to a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved lighting details, including control of light spill and glare, the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to residential amenity. On this basis, the development is considered to comply with Policies DM1 and DM8 of the EBLP

Highways, Access and Parking

Policies DM13 and DM14 of the EBLP require development to provide safe and suitable access arrangements and adequate parking provision, taking account of the nature and scale of the use.

The site is served from the existing vehicular access to Portsmouth Road and is already in recreational use. The proposal would increase activity at the site; however, the use would operate as part of the wider sports complex and would utilise the established access and parking arrangements. Information has been provided in relation to likely user numbers and parking demand, and the Local Highway Authority has been consulted.

Subject to the recommended parking provision being retained and managed for the development, and subject to the Construction Management Plan being adhered to (as reviewed by the Environmental Health Officer and Highways Officer), to control the construction phase, the proposal is not considered to result in severe highway impacts or unsafe conditions on the local highway network. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policies DM13 and DM14 of the EBLP.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy DM11 seeks to protect biodiversity and requires development to avoid harm to ecological interests, with appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement where

necessary. Strategic Policy S9 is also relevant in respect of green infrastructure, habitat connectivity and ecological enhancement.

The site lies in proximity to designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, including the Birches/Westwood Greenway and Netley Farm SINC. The application site itself comprises modified grassland associated with the existing sports use, together with areas of informal parking, hardstanding and gravel. Ecological information has been submitted in support of the application, together with Biodiversity Net Gain information. The Council's Ecologist has confirmed that the submitted baseline and proposals plans, condition assessments, Biodiversity Net Gain metric, BNG strategy form, draft Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and Ecological Assessment are complete and satisfactory. No errors were identified within the submitted metric.

The submitted Ecological Assessment concludes that the site is of low to moderate ecological value overall. It identifies the most ecologically valuable features as the boundary hedgerows, lines of trees and individual trees, in particular the veteran oak and associated tree group at the western end of the southern boundary. No evidence of protected species was recorded during the field survey. However, the site does provide habitat with potential to support nesting birds and bats commuting and foraging along the site boundaries. The assessment concludes that the development has been designed to avoid the most sensitive ecological features and, subject to mitigation, is not anticipated to result in significant adverse ecological impacts.

The proposed mitigation and enhancement measures include the retention and protection of boundary vegetation and trees, the use of a wildlife-sensitive lighting scheme, and the application of seasonal safeguards during construction to avoid harm to nesting birds. In addition, the ecological submission proposes native hedgerow enhancement, the creation of areas of mixed native scrub, the provision of a traditional orchard habitat, and the installation of bat and bird boxes in order to enhance habitat diversity and strengthen ecological connectivity across the site. The locations of the installed bat and bird boxes will be required to be confirmed by photographs.

The Ecologist has also identified potential temporary ecological impacts arising from the installation of the drainage pipe and its outlet into the existing stream. Conditions will therefore require these works, together with any associated vegetation removal, to be undertaken under ecological supervision. Disturbed grassland and scrub will be required to regenerate or be replanted with native scrub species where necessary. Works affecting the stream and its banks will also need to be minimised, undertaken using appropriate pollution-prevention measures and designed to avoid erosion, with exposed ground promptly stabilised and reinstated. Any separate drainage or watercourse consent would need to be obtained before the relevant works commence.

The application is also accompanied by Biodiversity Net Gain material. The submitted draft Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan has been accepted in principle. A final HMMP will, however, be required at the discharge of condition stage and will need to include a specific planting plan and a detailed 30-year habitat management schedule setting out the management requirements for each habitat type. Taken together with the submitted ecological mitigation and enhancement measures, the proposal demonstrates that the statutory biodiversity gain requirement can be addressed. The final Biodiversity Gain Plan and any off-site provision, if required, will be secured through the separate statutory biodiversity gain condition required by legislation.

In respect of lighting, the Council's Ecologist has advised that a detailed wildlife-sensitive lighting plan can be secured by condition. The plan will need to demonstrate that sensitive habitats, including the veteran oak, retained trees, scrub and hedgerows, will be kept dark in accordance with the recommendations in section 5 of the Ecological Assessment. Subject to the approval and implementation of such a scheme, the development would not be expected to result in unacceptable harm to bats commuting or foraging along the site boundaries.

Conditions will also require vegetation removal to take place outside the main bird-nesting season, normally between the beginning of March and the end of August. Where this is not possible, the vegetation will need to be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours before clearance. Any active nest identified would need to be protected by an appropriate buffer until the birds have fledged and left the nest. Retained hedgerows, lines of trees and individual trees, particularly along the southern, western and northern boundaries, will also be protected during construction in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

Subject to conditions securing the wildlife-sensitive lighting plan, nesting-bird safeguards, protection of retained habitats and trees, ecological supervision and reinstatement associated with the drainage works, confirmation of the installation of bat and bird boxes, and implementation and management of the ecological enhancements through the final HMMP, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies DM11 and S9 of the EBLP. The biodiversity net gain requirement will be addressed through the statutory biodiversity gain condition under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by the Environment Act 2021.

Trees

There are existing trees within and around the wider site which contribute to the character of the area. The application has been accompanied by arboricultural information, including tree protection measures where required, which has been reviewed and agreed by the Tree Officer. On the basis of the submitted information, the development can be carried out without unacceptable harm to retained trees, subject to compliance with the submitted protection measures and further details with regard to the drainage outflow. The proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard and consistent with Policy DM1 of the EBLP.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Policies DM5 and DM6 of the EBLP require development to appropriately address flood risk and surface water management respectively. The site of the proposed courts is not itself identified as being at significant risk of flooding, although areas nearby are susceptible to surface water flooding.

A drainage strategy has been submitted to demonstrate that surface water arising from the development can be managed appropriately and includes a drainage pipe and outfall connecting to the existing stream. The Lead Local Flood Authority has reviewed the submitted Surface Water Drainage Design and confirmed that sufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposals are hydraulically viable.

The proposed outfall will require Ordinary Watercourse Consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority. This is a separate consent from planning permission and must be obtained before the connection is made, as consent cannot be granted retrospectively. The consent process will also determine whether any associated remedial works, such as de-silting, are required.

The Lead Local Flood Authority has also advised that further details are required regarding the long-term maintenance and ownership of the surface water drainage features. A condition will therefore require the submission and approval of maintenance schedules for each drainage feature, together with details of the parties responsible for their future management, prior to the first use.

Subject to the drainage system being implemented in accordance with the approved strategy, the necessary Ordinary Watercourse Consent being obtained, the ecological safeguards and habitat-reinstatement measures being followed, and suitable long-term maintenance arrangements being secured by condition, the proposal would not increase flood risk on or off the site or result in unacceptable ecological harm associated with the drainage works. The development is therefore acceptable in respect of drainage and accords with Policies DM5 and DM6 of the EBLP.

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 (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality; (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 – Updated 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.

Planning Balance

The proposal would introduce six canopied padel tennis courts within an existing sports complex in the countryside and settlement gap. While the development introduces additional built form and activity, the proposal is directly related to the established recreational use of the site and is supported in principle by Policies S5 and DM34 of the EBLP. The development would deliver enhanced sporting provision and community benefit, in line with the objectives of the Development Plan, the NPPF and the Council's Playing Pitch and Built Leisure Facilities Strategy.

The visual impact of the development, including the canopies, fencing and associated works is considered acceptable in the context of the existing sports complex and can be satisfactorily accommodated within the site through landscaping and materials. Subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable impacts in respect of residential amenity, highways, drainage, trees or ecology.

The proposal is considered to accord with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations that indicate planning permission should be withheld. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Conclusion:

Recommendation:	PERMIT ☒	REFUSE ☐
Comments ...		