
APPLICATION NO.	P16/V3021/FUL
SITE	Wantage Town FC Wantage Leisure Centre Wantage, OX12
PARISH	WANTAGE
PROPOSAL	New floodlit all weather sports pitch with perimeter fencing plus 55 additional car parking spaces and coach parking/turning area. Improvement of sight lines to an existing road junction. Associated landscaping and retention of the Armoury Building. As amended per plans received 16 May 2017.
WARD MEMBER(S)	Charlotte Dickson St John Dickson
APPLICANT OFFICER	Wantage Town FC Hanna Zembrzycka-Kisiel

RECOMMENDATION

To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

Compliance

1. Time limit.
2. Approved plans.
3. Materials in accordance with application.
4. Floodlight posts to be painted in dark green.
5. Access, parking and turning in accordance with plans.
6. Lighting - hours of operation (football pitch).
7. Lighting - hours of operation (parking).
8. Construction traffic management and travel plan (June 2017).
9. Landscape – implementation.
10. Landscape – maintenance.

Details to be submitted prior to commencement:

11. Tree protection plan.
12. Drainage details (surface and foul (full)).

Informatives

13. Works within the highway (S278).
14. Temporary obstructions.
15. Route alterations.
16. Vehicle access (construction).
17. Improvements to routes.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 The application is referred to committee as the application site is within the ownership of the Vale of White Horse District Council.
- 1.2 The application site is located to the south of Portway in Wantage. The proposed all weather sports pitch is to be located towards the northern end of Wantage Town Football Club's existing grass pitches, immediately adjacent to the Wantage Leisure Centre. The leisure centre is located within the sports grounds of King Alfred's School. The location plan is **attached** at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a new floodlit all weather sports pitch with perimeter fencing plus 55 additional car parking spaces and coach parking/turning area. This also includes an improvement of sight lines to an existing road junction and associated landscaping and the retention of the existing armoury building.
- 1.4 The scheme initially proposed demolition of the old armoury building, a non-designated heritage asset, located to the north-west of the application site. Due to an objection raised by the Council's Conservation and Design Officer as well as a number of objections received from local residents, the proposal was amended (in February and May 2017). As a result of these amendments the old armoury building will not be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.5 **A site location plan is below:**



2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

2.1 Below is a summary of the responses received to the submission. A full copy of all the comments made can be viewed online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Wantage Town Council	Supports the application	
North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	<p>Object. The objections received to the initial proposal can be summarised as the proposal will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a harmful impact upon the character of the AONB, mainly the proposed floodlighting may harm the dark skies of the AONB if poorly designed and operates unsuitably; -impact upon the existing trees; -no proper “hours of operation” have been given; -additional landscape should be proposed to decrease; <p>The installation of a green mesh to help to lessen the impact of the proposed floodlights was suggested.</p>	
Countryside Access	No objections, subject to informatives.	
Sport England	No objections.	
Conservation Officer Vale	No objections to the amended scheme.	
Landscape Architect	No objections to the amended scheme.	
Leisure Department (Vale of White Horse DC)	No objections.	
Countryside Officer (South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse)	No objections to the amended scheme.	
Vale - Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council)	No objections to the amended scheme.	

Forestry Team (Vale of White Horse)	No objections, subject to condition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree protection plan to be submitted
Health & Housing - Env. Protection Team - Approve	No objections, subject to condition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hours of operation
CPRE	Object <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposal will have a harmful impact upon the character of the AONB, mainly the proposed floodlighting may harm the dark skies of the AONB if poorly designed and operate unsuitably; - The proposed floodlights will have a harmful impact upon the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties; - There will be unacceptable noise level; - There is no sound buffer proposed; - The proposal is against the NPPF.
Neighbours Comments (object)	16 letters of objection have been received. The reasons for objection can be summarised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposal will have a harmful impact upon the character of the AONB; - The proposed floodlights will have a harmful impact upon the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties; - Light spillage, glare, intrusion, impact on reasonable enjoyment of dwellings; - There will be unacceptable noise level; - Traffic generation; - Harmful impact upon the wildlife; - Willow Lane is a pedestrian footpath, and no traffic should use it for the construction purposes; - The proposal would result in loss of trees; - There is no proposal for the additional lighting or bus shelters; - There is no sound buffer proposed; - The proposal is of a poor design; - There was no proper consultation with the residents; - The proposal is against the NPPF
Neighbours	15 letters of support have been received, stating

Comments (support)	the there is a real need for the proposed development, as there are many sports clubs which would benefit from the proposed scheme
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3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 [P14/V2761/FUL](#) - Approved (02/07/2015)

Construction of a 2m extension to the rear fencing on our outside football courts. The extension will be designed to stop footballs landing in the back gardens of the occupants of newly built houses off of the A338.

3.2 **Pre-application History**

[P14/V1296/PEM](#) – Pre-app response (14/07/2014)

New floodlit all weather sports pitch with perimeter fencing, new changing block at Alfredian Park comprising changing rooms, office and wcs and replacement parking. New building and parking to support children's football at Tugwell Field.

3.3 **Screening Opinion requests**

N/A

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The application site is located within the North Wessex Downs AONB which under planning legislation is considered as a sensitive area. However, the proposal does not represent a major development, neither the application site is above 5ha. Consequently the proposal is beneath the thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 and this proposal is not EIA development and there is no requirement under the Regulations to provide a screening opinion.

5.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

5.1 The relevant planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

1. The principle of enhancing the sport and recreation facilities in this location;
2. The impact on the amenities of the neighbouring residents;
3. The impact on the character and appearance of the area and landscape setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty;
4. Highway impacts; and
5. Ecology impacts.

5.2 **Principle of the proposed development**

The application site was granted planning permission in 2011 (P11/V0469/FUL) for a similar development, however this permission has lapsed.

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 73 confirms that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities.

- 5.4 Saved local plan policy L8 confirms that small scale developments for open space, sport and recreation will be permitted within or on the edge of settlements provided that that meet a local need, do not harm the character of the surrounding area and do not have a detrimental impact on the ecology of the area.
- 5.5 The proposal would provide enhanced sport and recreational opportunities for the residents of Wantage and the surrounding area. Therefore the proposal would contribute towards the social role of sustainability by providing opportunities for accessible and enhanced local facilities, and the economic role by increasing the opportunity for the club to increase membership and players.
- 5.6 As such, officers consider that the principle of the proposal is acceptable and would comply with saved policy L8 in the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 and the provisions of the NPPF.
- 5.7 **Design and layout**
The proposed scheme has been amended due to an objection from the Council's Design and Conservation Officer, as well as due to the concerns raised initially by the Oxfordshire County Council Highway Engineer and the Council's Forestry Officer, who requested further information and clarification to be submitted for further assessment.
- 5.8 The proposed new parking arrangements and proposed lighting scheme are to be located to the east of the existing Leisure Centre. The application also proposes a comprehensive landscape scheme. Whilst the proposal would alter the area immediately to the east of the Leisure Centre, the proposal would be visible in the context of the existing Leisure Centre and therefore it is not considered that it would have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the area.
- 5.9 Furthermore the initially proposed landscape scheme (including the proposed trees to be planted) has been discussed with the group of residents and has been amended in line with their suggestions. The landscape scheme has replaced 3 no. Field Maples with the same number of Birch trees and a single Bird Cherry with a Whitebeam. The amendments have been assessed by both the Landscape and Forestry Officers, who have raised no objections to the proposed changes.
- 5.10 As such, given the location of the proposed new car and bus/coach parking spaces within the build-up area of Wantage, immediately to the east of the operating Leisure Centre, the Officers are satisfied that the proposal is acceptable and in line with the local plan policy CP37 and relevant national planning policies, and the council's adopted Design Guide 2015.
- 5.11 **Residential amenity**
Saved policy DC9 in the Local Plan 2011 states that development would not be permitted if it would unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties or the wider environment in terms of loss of privacy, dominance,

noise or vibration, smells or dust, pollution or external lighting. Protecting amenity is a core principle of the NPPF.

- 5.12 In addition, paragraph 125 of the NPPF specifically refers to lighting, stating: “By encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”
- 5.13 **Residential amenity - light**
Saved local plan policy DC20 states that external lighting will only be permitted where there will be no adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties, that the lighting proposed is the minimum necessary to undertake the task for which it is required and that potential light pollution from glare and spillage is minimised.
- 5.14 Detailed luminance maps have been submitted with the application, demonstrating the light spill from the proposed floodlights. The lux level is the measurement of light reaching a surface where 1 Lux is given by one lumen falling evenly on a square metre.
- 5.15 The submitted plans show that the lux levels of the lighting approaching neighbouring properties to the east of the proposed football pitch would be at a low level, 2 lux at the elevations of the dwellings. As a means of example of comparison, an average residential side street light would be approximately 5 lux as stated in “Secured by Design - lighting against crime: a guide for crime reduction professionals”. The proposed columns to support the floodlights for the football pitch would be 14.5 m high and would be conditioned to be painted a dark green colour. Further to that there is an existing mature hedgerow to the north and east of the proposed football pitch, which will provide an additional level of screening.
- 5.16 The proposed lighting around the proposed car parking area will measure 6m in height and the lux plan illustrates that the lux levels of the lighting approaching the east site’s boundary would be between 1 and 15 level. Further to that the specification of the proposed floodlight for the parking area states that they will be “Starbeam” range which are precision engineered LED area floodlights, which are designed to reduce obtrusive spill light. The Council’s environmental health team has raised no objections to the proposed scheme.
- 5.17 **Residential amenity – noise**
The proposed floodlights would allow the use of the proposed football pitch for longer periods. The Council’s Environmental Protection Team has assessed the proposal and raised no objections subject to conditions, including that the proposed football pitch is not used after 20:00.
- 5.18 It has been raised by the applicant that the hours of operation requested by the Council’s Environmental Protection Team are unreasonable and unjustifiable, as the conditions restricting the hours of operation imposed previously allowed the football pitch to be in use until 22:00 from Monday to Saturday and until 21:30 on Sundays.

- 5.19 However, it must be noted that planning permission P11/V0469/FUL has lapsed. When planning permission P11/V0469/FUL was granted in 2011, the closest residential development to the east of the proposed football pitch was located approximately 83m away. After planning permission P11/V0469/FUL was granted, a residential development (ref. P11/V1453/O) was allowed at appeal (ref. APP/V3120/A/11/2163401) in 2012, therefore there has been a material change in circumstance. As the closest residential dwellings will now be located approximately 12m away from the proposed football pitch, the condition requested by the Environmental Protection Team is considered reasonable, and is recommended by officers to be attached to any planning permission granted.
- 5.20 The proposal has been thoroughly assessed against both local and national planning policy and against national technical and best practice guidance. The council's own environmental protection officer has also reviewed the application and has raised no objections, subject to conditions. It is considered reasonable and necessary to attach planning conditions strictly controlling the time that the floodlights can be used.
- 5.21 Therefore, officers do not consider that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the amenities of any of the neighbouring properties, and would comply with saved local plan 2011 policies DC9 and DC20, the NPPF, NPPG and the council's adopted Design Guide 2015.
- 5.22 **Landscape and visual impact**
The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (paragraph 109) and protect intrinsically dark landscapes from light pollution (paragraph 125).
- 5.23 Adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 policy CP37 requires that development is of a high quality design and that it does not adversely affect those attributes that make a positive contribution to the character of the locality. Saved Local Plan 2011 policy DC20 states that external lighting will only be permitted where there will be no adverse effect on the character of the area.
- 5.24 Saved Local Plan 2011 policy L8 also requires that development does not require buildings or works of a type or scale which would be harmful to the character of the area.
- 5.25 The application site is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Saved Local Plan policy NE6 seeks to conserve and enhance of the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB and planning decisions will have regard to its setting.
- 5.26 It has been argued by the objectors that the proposal will have a harmful impact upon the character on the AONB, mainly the proposed floodlighting may harm the dark skies of the AONB, if poorly designed and if it operates unsuitably.

- 5.27 It is noted that while the site lies within the AONB, it is also contained by housing to the east, the Leisure centre to the north and Wantage Football Ground to the south, with the existing all-weather football pitch also floodlit.
- 5.28 The proposed football pitch and the floodlights would be seen within the context of the existing sport facilities (to the south of the application site) and the leisure centre (to the north). Consideration has been given to the dark green colour to help the columns assimilate into the setting of the site, which is surrounded by mature hedgerows to the north, east and further to the west of the application site.
- 5.29 The Council's Landscape Officer initially raised concerns, due to the low level of specification and details for the proposed floodlights and exact football pitch dimensions being provided. The additional landscape plan for the football pitch illustrates that the proposed access for contractors and the football club to access the facilities will be obtained from the south-west corner of the application site, and will run along its western boundary. This is considered acceptable in the Landscape and Trees Officers' opinion, subject to an appropriate condition to be imposed to ensure that there will be minimal damage to the existing trees and hedges in that corner.
- 5.30 Given the application site is located between the built-up area of Wantage to the north, existing residential developments to the east, and the existing all weather football pitch to the south, and given the hours of operation would be restricted, it is not considered in the Officers opinion that the proposal would erode the character and appearance of the AONB to the level to justify a reason for refusal. The appropriate conditions securing the implementation and maintenance of the approved landscape scheme are recommended to be imposed to the planning permission.
- 5.31 **Flood risk and drainage**
The application is supported by an underground drainage scheme. The proposal would have to be SUDS compliant and it is considered in the officers' opinion that this could be secured by condition. Therefore, an appropriate condition securing the effective drainage of the site and to avoid flooding in line with adopted local plan policy CP42 will be imposed.
- 5.32 **Traffic, parking and highway safety**
Adopted local plan policy DC5 requires safe access for developments and that the road network can accommodate the traffic arising from the development safely. Adopted local plan policy DC20 states that external lighting will only be permitted where there will be no hazard to highway safety. The NPPF, as paragraph 32 states: "Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe."
- 5.33 Concerns have been raised by local residents in relation to the proposed access for the construction traffic. It was mentioned that no access for the vehicle traffic should be allowed via Willow Lane.

- 5.34 The local highways authority has been consulted on the proposal, and has been liaising directly with the applicant's highway consultant while the Transport Statement and Construction Traffic Management Plan was prepared.
- 5.35 The revised Construction Traffic Management Plan (June 2017) takes into account the Highway Officer's comments from the consultation response (14th March) and a meeting on the 4th April, and further dialogue in May 2017.
- 5.36 The submitted amended documents and plans clearly states that "no construction traffic associated with the construction of the proposed car park and bus/coach parking and turning area at the Leisure Centre or the construction of the all-weather sports pitch at Wantage Town Football Club will take access off Willow Lane."
- 5.37 The amended Construction Traffic Management Plan has been assessed by the Oxfordshire County Council Highway Engineer who has raised no objections, subject to conditions.
- 5.38 Officers do not consider that the proposal would result in severe harm to the highway network. As such the proposal would comply with local plan policies DC5 and DC20, the NPPF, NPPG and the council's adopted Design Guide 2015.
- 5.39 **Historic Environment**
The adopted local plan policy CP39 sets out the Council's approach to conserving historic assets across the district. Although the Armoury is not a listed building, however it is a non-designated heritage asset. It appears to form a grouping with the building immediately adjacent, as well as with the Primary school, and various listed buildings on the opposite side of the road. Therefore, given its prominent location, and the positive contribution to both, the street scene and the character of the surrounding area, it was considered in the Conservation and Design Officer's opinion that the Old Armoury, although not listed, should be retained. As the proposed scheme has been amended, the consulted Conservation and Design Officer has raised no objections to the proposal, and therefore it is considered to be in line with the adopted local plan CP39.
- 5.40 **Biodiversity**
Paragraph 117 of the NPPF refers to the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, whilst Paragraph 118 sets out the basis for determination of planning applications. Paragraph 125 also seeks to protect nature conservation from light pollution. Adopted Policy CP46 seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity across the district.
- 5.41 As the NPPG highlights, another key consideration with proposals for external lighting is the impact on local wildlife. The positioning, duration, type of light source and level of lighting are all factors that can affect the impact of light on wildlife.
- 5.42 The site is not located within an identified ecologically sensitive area, however

the hedgerows along Willow Lane were previously assessed as providing a bat commuting and feeding corridor and the previously approved scheme (P11/V0469/FUL) was eventually agreed included a lighting scheme designed to reduce the backward spill of light into Willow Lane.

- 5.43 Given that the amended design of the proposed lighting scheme (by moving the proposed all weather football pitch further to the south away from Willow Lane and re-designed the lighting plans), reduces the effects of light spill into Willow Lane and the impact on the known bat feeding and commuting area, the council's ecology team has no objections to the proposal.
- 5.44 Therefore, officers do not consider that the proposal would result in any adverse ecological impact. As such the proposal would comply with the adopted policy CP46, provision in the NPPF and NPPG.

5.45 **Other**

5.46 **Public right of way**

Public footpath (Wantage 391/16) runs between the leisure centre and proposed all weather pitch along Willow Lane. This footpath is heavily used by both pedestrians and cyclists traveling between Wantage and Letcombe Regis, as well as by those exercising a private right of vehicular access to the allotments, cottage and horse paddocks. Oxfordshire County Council's public rights of way officer has been consulted on the application, and has raised no objections to the proposal in terms of the impact on the public right of way, subject to suitable informatives.

6.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This application has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), relevant saved and adopted policies in the local plan 2011 and Local Plan 2031 Part 1, as well as against all other material planning considerations. The application is recommended for approval as the development would comply with the relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework. The principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable as it would enhance a community facility contributing to the social and economic sustainability of the community. The environmental impacts have been carefully assessed and officers do not consider that the proposal would harm the amenities of neighbouring properties, the visual amenity of the area of the AONB, local wildlife or highway safety.

7.0 **The following planning policies have been taken into account:**

7.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 policies:**

- CP01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CP03 - Settlement Hierarchy
- CP37 - Design and Local Distinctiveness
- CP39 - The Historic Environment
- CP42 - Flood Risk
- CP44 - Landscape

CP46 - Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity

7.2 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

HE4 - Development within setting of listed building

L8 - Provision of small-scale Local Leisure Facilities

NE6 - The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

7.3 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

7.4 National Planning Practice Guidance 2014

7.5 Vale of White Horse adopted Design Guide 2015 SPD

7.6 Neighbourhood Plan

Wantage neighbourhood plan is still under consideration, further to the independent examiner inspected it, and recommended that the plan should be revised. As such at the present time holds limited weight.

7.7 Humans Rights Act 1998

7.8 Equalities Act 2010

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