

SECTION D
DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents – the deposited documents, views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposal dossier for each case and also as might be additionally indicated.

Item D1

Floodlit synthetic multi-sports pitch with associated car parking and landscaping, Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys, Tunbridge Wells – TW/09/79.

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 14 July 2009.

Application by the Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys for construction of a fenced and floodlit synthetic multi-sports pitch with associated car parking and landscaping at Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys, Tunbridge Wells (Ref: TW/09/79)

Recommendation: permission be granted subject to conditions

Local Member(s): Mr R. Bullock

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Tunbridge Wells Boys Grammar School is located to the north of Tunbridge Wells town centre and to the west of St John's Road. The School's playing field is detached from the school buildings, located 100m south from the site. A Sports and Youth Centre site owned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council separates the buildings from the playing field. The playing field of Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys is adjacent to the playing field, Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Girls playing field to the south and St Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School playing field to the west. A Territorial Army Centre and residential properties (Leighton Close) are to the east of the playing field (see D1.3). The group of the playing fields is within the previously designated High Weald Special Landscape Area and is also designated as a Rural Fringe of Tunbridge Wells. Open countryside spreads to the west from Reynolds Lane and forms part of the Green Belt. The proposed floodlit pitch would be located in the northern part of the playing fields, south from the Sports and Youth Centre.

Background and Need

2. Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys is a State funded grammar school teaching 1200 pupils age 11-18. In accordance with Department for Children, Schools and Families guidelines the School should have both a sports hall and gymnasium. The School has a small gymnasium and has access to the Sports Centre to the south of the school, however it is unable to use the latter facilities as much as it would like to due to demand from other users. The School has 3 natural turf pitches on site but these are unusable for many months of the year due to weather conditions and the ground being clay based. That results in the ground being waterlogged in the winter and hard baked in the summer. The applicant states that this has a significant impact upon the School's ability to deliver the sporting curriculum.
3. Further, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006 states that there is "an overall deficiency of recreational open space in the Plan area when measured against the National Playing Fields Association recommended standards". It is also stated there that

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“the distribution of playing space is uneven across the plan area” and that “the greatest deficiency is in the provision of soccer pitches in the western part of the Borough, particularly Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Pembury”. The school is located in the Southborough area. The applicant advises that the Local Plan informs that Southborough has the lowest provision of open space for youth and adult use, including sports pitches in the Local Plan area with only 0.7ha per 1000 population. This document states that more than quantity, Tunbridge Wells Borough needs an improvement of the quality of sporting facilities, especially dual use floodlit pitches. I am also advised by the Kent Sports Facilities Development Manager that the funding for the proposed facility depends on the provision of the pitch for dual community use. *Planning Policy Guidance 17(PPG17) Open Space, Indoor Sports and Recreation Assessment (December 2006)* recognises a need to increase access to outdoor sporting facilities for the benefit of the local community, especially in rural areas.

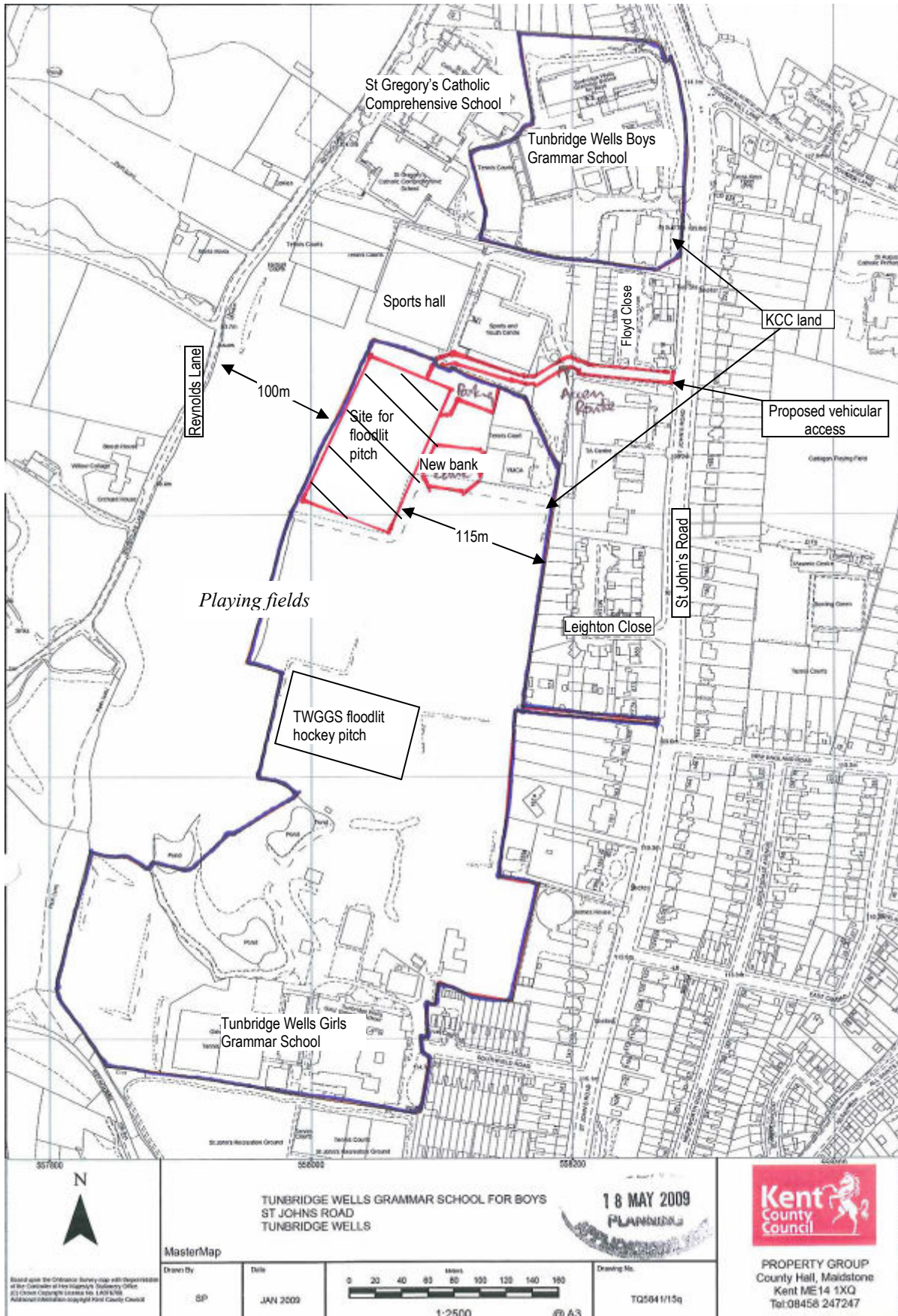
4. Prior to the submission of this application, the School had considered other possible sites for the location of the floodlit pitch. However, it was considered that any other option would result in positioning the pitch much closer to the residential properties on Leighton Close and therefore leading to a potentially unacceptable impact on the residential amenity, especially with respect to levels of light and noise.

Proposal

5. The application proposes to construct a 120m x 66 metre synthetic turf sports pitch, which is to be predominantly used for rugby and soccer. The facility would be aligned with its long axis running approximately N/S. The design includes a 3m high green weldmesh fence on all sides of the proposed new pitch with the central 30m of the fence at each end of the pitch increased in height to 5m to prevent the ball being kicked over. The mesh infill would be green 50mm x 50mm spacing between wires with the lower 1.2m portion being green 358 mesh to create a stronger boundary. The fence posts would also be green powder coated. The proposal includes installation of eight 15m high floodlighting columns. Each of the eight columns would accommodate two 2kW luminaires to achieve an average of 200 lux illuminance. The lighting would be governed by a time clock and be capable of partial switching to illuminate only half of the pitch if that is all that is being used at the time.
6. The proposed surfacing would be of a permeable nature, the main pitch area would be a rubber crumb filled synthetic turf having a pile length of around 65mm, this would be laid over a resin bound rubber crumb shock pad, on an engineering porous macadam base (see D1.5). Depending on a further geotechnical survey, which would be undertaken prior to the construction there might be a need to provide a formal drainage system connecting to an existing surface water drainage system. Along the eastern side of the pitch it is proposed to construct a macadam surfaced spectator area. The existing ground level slopes from west to east so there would need to be some cut and fill to produce the required finished levels. It is envisaged retaining the sloped earth embankments following the construction of the pitch, although gabion baskets would be used if retaining was required. Any surplus topsoil would be used to increase the width of the plateau to the east of the proposed pitch on which it is proposed to plant trees to mitigate any potential impacts on the residential properties to the east.

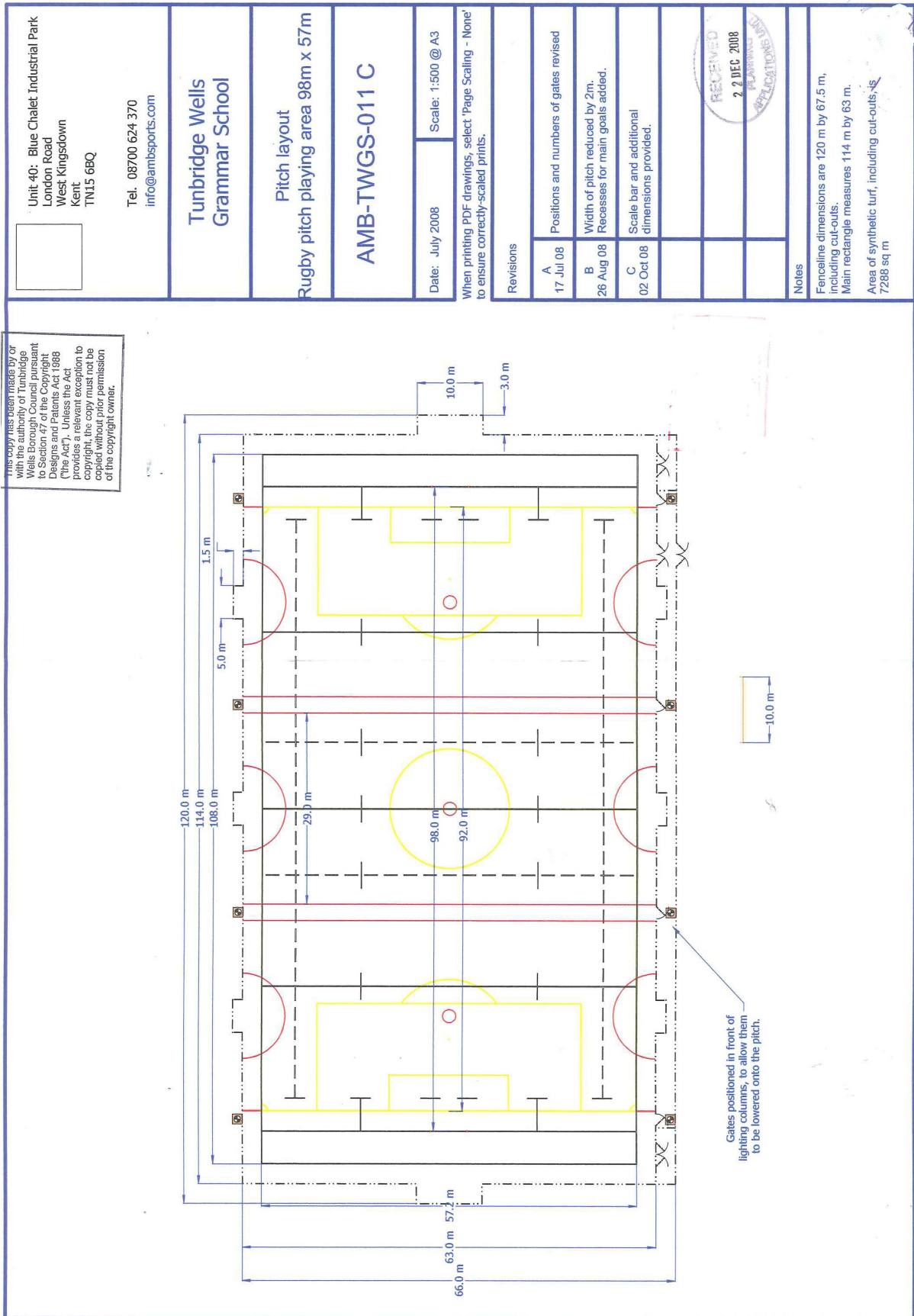
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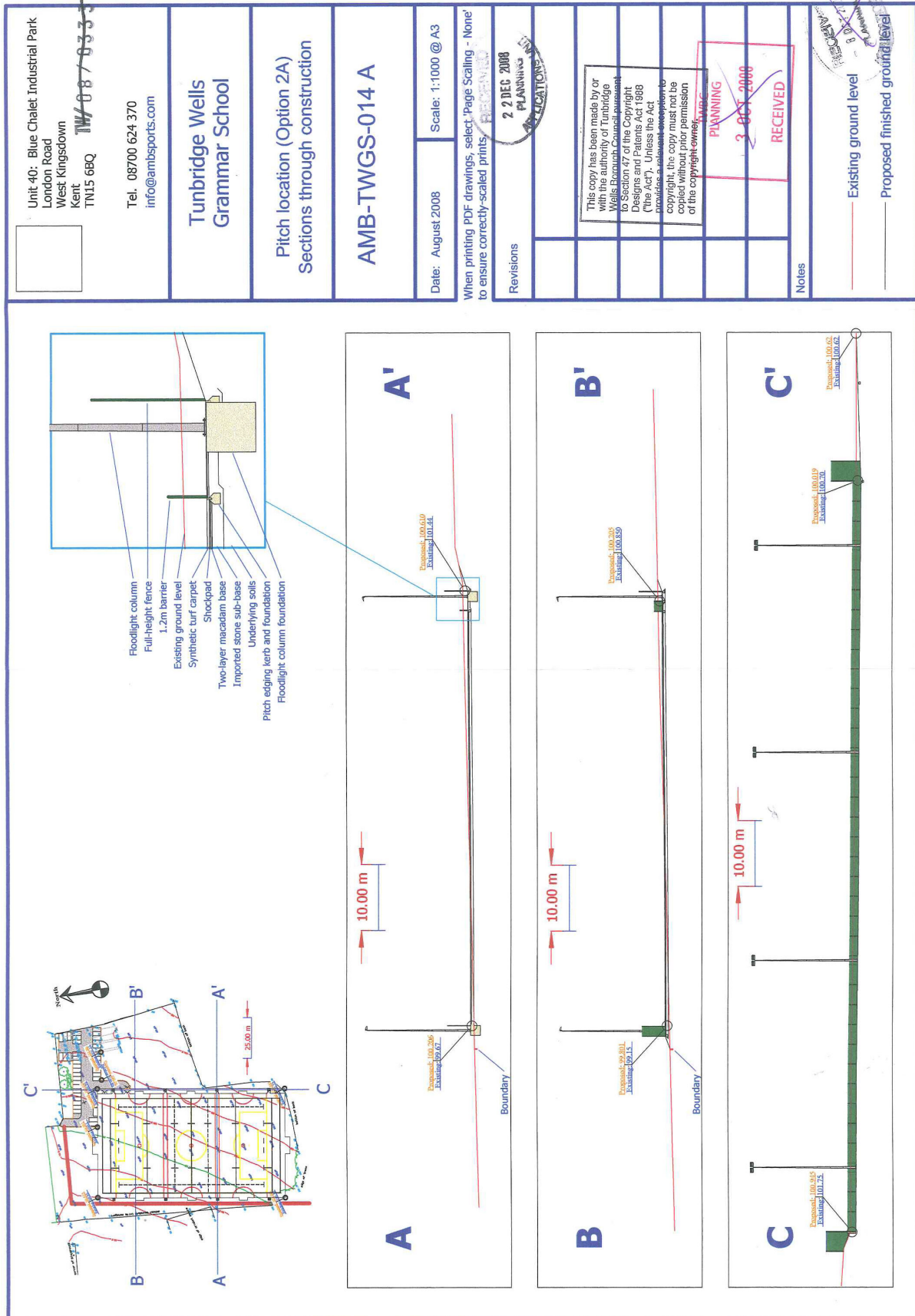


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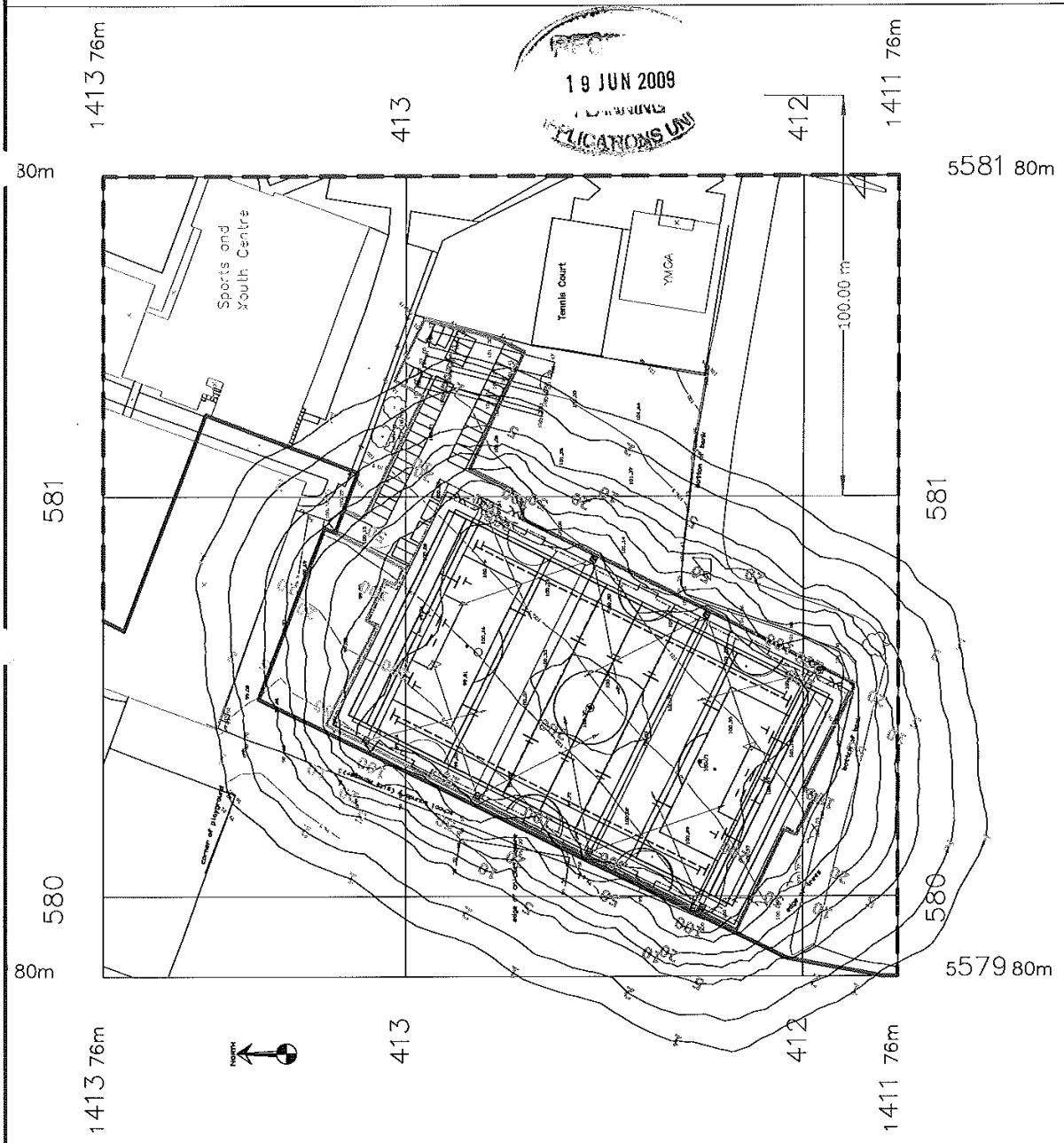
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 <p>Unit 40: Blue Chalet Industrial Park London Road West Kingsdown Kent TN15 6BQ</p> <p>Tel. 08700 624 370 info@ambsports.com</p>	
<p>Tunbridge Wells Grammar School</p>	
<p>Proposed Synthetic Turf Pitch Predicted extent of illuminated area</p>	
<p>AMB-TWGS-012 D</p>	
Date: July 2008	Scale: 1:1000 @ A3
<p>When printing PDF drawings, select 'Page Scaling - None' to ensure correctly-scaled prints.</p>	
<p>Revisions</p>	
A 17 Jul 08	Orientation of synthetic pitch reversed. 42 car parking spaces provided.
B 26 Aug 08	Width of pitch reduced by 2m. Recesses for main goals added.
C 02 Oct 08	Boundary line colour corrected. North point and scale bar added.
D 16 Jun 09	Height of lighting columns reduced to 15m. Overspill predictions revised accordingly.
<p>Notes</p> <p>Application site is edged in RED. Adjoining land in the ownership of the School is edged in BLUE.</p> <p>When printing from PDF, select 'Page Scaling - none' to ensure properly-scaled prints</p>	



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7. It is proposed that the new floodlit pitch would be made available to local football and rugby clubs who could use the facility after school hours and at weekends. It is also proposed to designate a spectator area to the east of the pitch. The applied hours of use are:
- Weekday use between 9.00 to 22.00 hours
 - Saturday use 10.00 to 20.00 hours; and
 - Sunday and Bank Holidays 10.00 to 18.00 hours.
8. Adjacent to the proposed pitch would be a new car park for 42 cars to be available to users outside school hours. Cycling storage is also proposed within the new car park. It is considered that the additional traffic generated by opening the facility to the wider community outside school hours could be accommodated in the new car park. During school hours, the car park would be made available to the 6th Form students who currently park in the surrounding roads causing inconvenience for local residents as recognised in the School Travel Plan. The school has 60 car parking bays to the north of the pitch adjacent to its school buildings which are used during school hours by the school's staff. In the evening and on the weekend the school's car park is shared with the Sports Centre and for other events at school.

Planning Policy

9. On 6 July 2009 the Kent and Medway Structure Plan ceased to have development plan status. The Development Plan Policies now relevant to the consideration of the application are summarised below:
- (i) South East Plan 2009:
- | | |
|------------|--|
| Policy CC6 | Sustainable communities and character of the environment |
| Policy C4 | Landscape and Countryside Management – local planning authorities should aim to protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the region's landscape |
| Policy C5 | Managing the rural-urban fringe |
| Policy S5 | Cultural and Sporting Activity - participation in sport should be encouraged in order to improve overall standards of fitness be based on an audit of supply against estimated demand |
| Policy S6 | Community Infrastructure- where appropriate, the mixed use of community facilities should be encouraged by local authorities to make effective use of resources and reduce the need to travel. Appropriate facilities should be made available to all sections of the community, in both urban and rural settlements |
- (ii) Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2006:
- | | |
|------------|--|
| Policy EN1 | New development should be well designed and respect its setting. |
| Policy EN8 | Outdoor lighting schemes should be well designed for its purpose and respect the character and amenity of the area |

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- Policy EN25 Development outside the Limits to Built Development should have a minimal impact on the landscape
- Policy EN27 Development within the Kent's Special Landscape Areas will only be permitted where it would cause no significant harm to the important landscape character of the area
- Policy RF2 Land within Rural Fringes will be safeguarded from permanent development as a reserve of land to meet longer-term development needs beyond the Plan period
- Policy LBD1 Outside the Limits to Built Development, development will only be permitted where it would be in accordance with all relevant policies contained in the Local Plan and the rural settlement and countryside policies in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan
- Policy CS3 Proposals for school provision will only be permitted within the Limits to Built Development unless it represents an extension to an established school development
- Policy R1 Existing or potential recreational open space will be protected
- Policy TP4 Seeks new development to be located where the road hierarchy has adequate capacity to safely cater for the traffic which would be generated by the development
- Policy TP5 Vehicle parking in connection with the development proposals will be restricted to the maximum necessary having regard to the local highway conditions
- Policy TP9 The cycle parking standards for non-residential developments will be applied

Consultations

10. **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:** raises objection to the proposal. The proposed floodlighting would, in the absence of any details of means of mitigation, harm the character and appearance of the wider countryside and this (former) Special Landscape Area contrary to Policies EN8 and EN25 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006.

Divisional Transportation Manager: raises no objection to the proposal.

The County Council's Lighting Advisor: raises no objection to the proposal. The floodlights chosen are of the flat glass type and horizontally mounted, which limits the light spill outside of the playing area to a minimum. The calculations show that this level drops to 1 lux at 35m from the side of the pitch facing the properties and this is well short of the end of the gardens. The properties in question have street lighting to the front of the properties which would give approximately 5 lux by comparison. There is also existing floodlighting in the sports and youth centre. The proposed lighting is in accordance with the Institution of Lighting Engineers *Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light*.

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The County Council's Landscape Advisor: raises no objection to the proposal. The proposal would detract slightly from the open character of the existing school playing fields and add to other surrounding urban edge features. However, it is not expected that the proposal would cause any significant adverse effects on the wider landscape. The well wooded surrounding landscape and the enclosing vegetation belts around the site restrict adverse effects on the setting of, and views from, the High Weald AONB which lies further to the west. A detailed landscaping scheme should be secured by a planning condition.

Local Member

11. The local Member Mr R. Bullock was notified of the application on the 15th October 2008.

Publicity

12. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice and the individual notification of 61 nearby properties.

Representations

13. 1 letter of representation was received in response to the proposal. The main comments can be summarised as follows:

- This pitch would be clearly visible from nearby housing and is on the edge of a Special Landscape Area and therefore it is important to minimise the visual impact;
- Questiones the need for eight columns and/or the height of the columns (16m) in light of the nearby TWGGS hockey pitch being lit by lamps on six 15m high columns;
- Specific landscaping plan should be submitted for consideration by local residents as well as the Planning Authority;
- In light of a second floodlit all-weather pitch proposal in this area, would like to see that the County Council and Borough Council give consideration to possible measures to improve the landscape and avoid further downgrading of its character;
- Draws similarity between the current proposal and the TWGGS hockey pitch and asks for the same restrictions to be imposed on the current scheme.

Discussion

Introduction

14. The application is required to be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan policies, unless other material considerations are of overriding importance. Therefore, the proposal is considered in the context of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2006 and the South East Plan 2009 and other material considerations, including those arising from consultation. Issues of particular relevance include impact upon the wider landscape, impact on playing fields, local residential amenity, light pollution, hours of use and traffic.

Wider Landscape Impact

15. The proposed site for where floodlit soccer/rugby pitch is within the former High Weald Special Landscape Area, where development proposals should only be permitted where they would cause no significant harm to the important landscape character of the area. Whilst this policy presumption has less currency (in the light of the emerging LDF Core Strategy and the end of the Structure Plan), the South East Plan policies also seek to

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protect and enhance the local distinctiveness of landscape. Appropriate mitigation measures should be adopted where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.

16. The proposal site is situated within existing school playing fields, which are well enclosed by mature native vegetation belts and large buildings to the north. The playing fields immediately abut the urban edge of Tunbridge Wells. The playing fields comprise amenity grassland with a distinct bank marking the change in ground level between the north and south of the site.
17. The proposal is to install a 3m high green weldmesh fence to the perimeter of the pitch. The fence would be 50mm x 50mm spacing between wires, which is most likely to blend in with the trees and planting and the wider landscape beyond. For that reason, I do not consider it to be detrimental to the character and appearance of the sensitive landscape.
18. However, the proposal also includes the installation of sixteen 2kW floodlight luminaires bolted on eight 15 metre high steel columns (originally the columns were to be 16m). This aspect of the scheme is more likely to have an effect on the wider landscape. On the other hand, the 15m high columns would be light grey and so blend in with cloudy sky. The provided technical details of the luminaires show that the potential light glare would be minimal due to its design to stop upward light. Also, the light spill would be contained well within the site boundary (extended to the St George's Catholic School playing fields) (D1.6). Overall, the new floodlit all-weather pitch would detract slightly from the open character of the existing school playing fields. Especially when illuminated, it would appear as part of the urban landscape. However it is not expected that the proposal would cause any significant adverse effects on the wider High Weald area. The secluded surrounding landscape and the enclosing vegetation belts around the site restrict any adverse impacts on the setting of, and views from, the High Weald AONB to the west. The school playing fields are also located at a lower level than the surrounding farmland to the west, so the visual impact of floodlighting would be further lessened.
19. For the purpose of mitigating the wider landscape impacts, it is important that the existing mature vegetation located along part of the existing bank is retained to form a visual screen to the proposal when viewed from the housing to the east. The County Landscape Advisor recommends that additional planting should be incorporated along the existing bank to the south of the proposed pitch to link the existing vegetation belt. Those requirements of protection during construction and additional planting could be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition, should this scheme be permitted. I would recommend that details of the changes in topography in relation to the existing bank and existing vegetation should also be submitted as part of the landscaping scheme.
20. In landscape sensitive locations, consideration to alternative sites should be considered. I am advised that other options had been considered before the application was submitted. However, every other location would result in constructing the floodlit pitch closer to residential properties and therefore was deemed less desirable. The protection of local amenity has been given a significant weight and as a result no immediate neighbours of the site wrote to object to the proposed siting. In addition to that, consideration is given to a number of other policies seeking to ensure that provision for community and sports facilities is made (South East Plan Policies S5, S6). The Tunbridge Wells Local Plan states that the Borough Council will support dual use of school facilities for recreational and other purposes where these are well placed to serve local needs. Therefore, the need for the high quality sports facility is given significant weight against other policies.

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21. Taking into account all of the above, I consider that the benefits of providing the improved facility would outweigh the limited impact on the special character of the landscape within which it sits and the wider landscape beyond.

Cumulative effects

22. It is also recognised that there is an already existing floodlit pitch in close proximity to the site and therefore a potential cumulative detrimental effect of these two floodlit pitches on the special character of the area should be considered.

23. In March 2008 a neighbouring Tunbridge Wells Grammar Girls School was granted planning permission for a hockey pitch. This was built on a sand base and is therefore not suitable for rugby and soccer games by any recognisable standards. The proposed pitch is on a rubber crumb base, which is considered to be a third generation pitch of much higher standard. I was advised by the Kent Sports Facilities Development Manager that the nearest location of a facility of this nature is in Maidstone, and then further in Ashford. He confirmed that there is a great shortage of such floodlit soccer pitches open to the wider community.

24. For comparison, the proposed pitch to the Boys School would be lit between 160-220 lux whilst the Girls School hockey pitch is lit to a higher standard of between 280-360 lux. The reason for the different lighting specifications is because games such as hockey and tennis involve faster moving ball than other games. Various light settings can be used on both pitches to minimise the use of energy and to minimise light pollution. It is noticed that the hockey pitch is slightly better concealed with planting abutting the pitch, especially when seen from the west. However, it is closer to residential properties than the proposed Boys School pitch. The two pitches are still over 120m away from each other separated by a couple of belts of mature vegetation. The likelihood of these pitches having a significant combined effect is small. On the other hand, one could say that it has been demonstrated that it is possible to position a floodlit pitch on those playing fields in a sensitive manner.

Rural Fringe

25. Consideration has to be given to the fact that the playing fields have a Rural Fringe designation. There are six areas of Rural Fringe identified in Tunbridge Wells and they all abut the built up area. Their aim is to safeguard land from development as a reserve of land to meet longer-term development needs beyond the Plan period, unless the proposals would meet the needs of an established use on the site. The proposal aims to address the demand for high quality sports pitches, which is an already established use on site and arguably is appropriate use for rural fringe land. On this basis it can be used for something other than standing vacant. Although there might be the appropriate quantity of sports pitches in the Borough available in accordance with some documents, it is clear that there is a shortage of quality sports pitches with floodlighting to increase the number of formal dual-use facilities with community use agreements. It is important to ensure that the available space for sports is well used and appropriate to the needs of the community. The need for the facility has been discussed in paragraphs 2 and 3.

26. Another issue important within the Rural Fringe is its natural environment, specifically local wildlife. In this site context, the development is unlikely to compromise any habitats as the proposed pitch would be in the middle of an existing playing field, which is regularly mown. Also, the construction of the pitch would not result in the removal of any trees or hedges. Therefore, there is little reason to consider that the natural environment would be significantly affected by the proposal.

27. As a result, I consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the principles of the Rural Fringe Plan Policy and conclude that the development would be appropriate within its location, especially that this Policy also encourages local authorities to support

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developments that aim to improve the overall standard of fitness and enrich the overall quality of life.

Playing fields

28. Tunbridge Wells Local Plan Policy R1 and national Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 17) sets out a policy presumption against development that would lead to the loss of playing fields. The aim of the national guidance is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality pitches to satisfy current and estimated future demand for sports pitches within an area. Consideration has been given to the impact of the proposal on the overall provision of playing fields in the area and its effect on the neighbouring schools. There was a concern that the use of adjoining playing fields could be compromised by enclosing one of the pitches with 3m fence. There was also a concern that the proposed car park would affect the provision of other sports facilities, such as long jump. Following submission of a detailed analysis of the use of the shared playing fields of both schools (St Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School and TW Boys Grammar School) and relocation of the long jump onto an adjacent site, Sport England was satisfied that the benefit of having the all-weather pitch which is open to the community would outweigh the probable reduction of the flexibility of the use of that part of the playing field. This view might have been different should the community use of the pitch be restricted in any significant way.

Residential amenity**Noise**

29. Tunbridge Wells Local Plan Policy EN1 protects the residential amenity from adverse impacts and development that could lead to unacceptable pollution including noise pollution.

30. The school has 3 natural turf pitches which were considered for the purpose of the development. One of the main reasons for choosing the proposed site is to minimise the impact on the residential homes in Leighton Close. The nearest residential property is 115m to the east of the pitch. One representation was received to the proposal from a resident over 220 m south east from the proposed site, who raised concerns that there would be an increase in noise pollution generated by players and spectators. His suggestion was that there should be no "commercial community use" allowed to avoid noise nuisance to residents. On the other hand, I note that the proposal is for dual use of the facility and I am advised that the project depends on external funding, which would not be released if the pitch was to be used only by the Schools. Tunbridge Wells Local Plan states that the Borough Council will support dual use of school facilities for recreational and other purposes where these are well placed to serve local needs. The site is well positioned in relation to residential areas and there is a shortage of high standard soccer pitches available to clubs in Tunbridge Wells Borough. Also, Sport England as a statutory consultee, insists that should permission be granted for this pitch then it must be open to the wider community. Therefore, the need for the high quality sports facility is given significant weight against other policies. I would not recommend restricting the use of the pitch to Schools only.

31. In the main, there would be an intensification of use of the playing field resulting from a significant improvement to the existing sports facilities. It is likely that there would be an increase in noise levels but such effect is not likely to be constant. The use is likely to vary from training sessions only to Club games attended by some limited number of spectators. The intensity of noise on sports playing fields usually varies and is difficult to control. However, the playing fields are shared by three big secondary schools and so the use of it for sporting activities has long been established. Nonetheless, this has been restricted until now by sunlight. Whilst the Government encourages authorities to make

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better use of School's facilities the most effective method of controlling noise levels associated with such sports facilities is by controlling hours of use. This is discussed in paragraph 33 below.

Visual amenity

32. Tunbridge Wells Local Plan Policy EN1 also protects residential amenity from adverse light intrusion. The detailed light spill calculations show that it has been designed to avoid such pollution impacts. The light spill levels supplied show that the lighting level varies between 160-220 lux and the lux levels drop rapidly beyond the boundary of the pitch and within 45m from the light source the light spill falls to 1 lux. Considering that the nearest residential property is approximately 115 m away from the pitch it is most unlikely that there would be any light intrusion by virtue of light spill, especially, as these numbers do not take into account any landscaping that exists or would be planted in the future. However, it must be noted that the lights would be visible from the top windows of surrounding houses and would add to the existing detracting features within the urban edge. When in use, the additional illumination caused by the proposed lights installed on the 15m high columns would significantly alter the existing evening time character of the view. However, the potential impact is unlikely to be significant enough to warrant refusal of the application on these grounds. The County Council's Lighting Advisor considers that the proposed floodlights would provide excellent containment of the light source. I would recommend that a planning condition is also imposed that the luminaries should be switched off when the pitch is not in use.
33. Overall, I consider that the development would be in accordance with the Tunbridge Wells Plan Policy EN1, which requires all developments to protect the amenity of their local surroundings and not lead to unacceptable light or noise pollution.

Hours of use

34. The current use of the Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys' playing fields is generally unrestricted apart from the natural limitation of daylight and the difficult clay based ground conditions described in paragraph 2. The proposed installation of a floodlit all-weather pitch aims to make a better use of the available playing field, which would be most noticed during winter months when the higher quality pitch would attract players when daylight is much restricted.
35. As discussed above, restricting hours of use is potentially the most effective way of protecting local amenity from noise and light pollution. The applicant proposes to use the new pitch with floodlighting between:

9.00 and 22.00 hours Mondays to Fridays,

10.00 and 20.00 hours Saturdays and

10.00 and 18.00 hours Sundays and Bank Holidays.

These hours would allow the Schools to use it during day time and Clubs during evenings and weekends. A local resident suggested that the hours of use of the facility should be restricted the same way as the Girls School hockey pitch which is to 21.00 hours with shorter times during weekends and only 8 weekends a year. On the other hand, Sport England requested that the use of the pitch including the floodlights should be permitted at least up to 22.00 hours, and any restrictions on use before this time to overcome possible amenity concerns should be avoided. However, I note that the pitch is further away from residential properties, is adjacent to the Youth and Sports Hall and Territorial Army buildings and there is no significant issue of access to the site through residential roads as was the case with the Girls School hockey pitch. Consequently, I do not consider it necessary to limit the use of this facility to the same degree, especially,

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considering that the benefits of making the facility available to Clubs is a balancing argument against the impact of floodlighting on the wider landscape. Therefore, I recommend that the use of the facility (the pitch and the floodlighting) should to be restricted as requested although there should be no use on Bank Holidays. I would add for information that the adjacent Centre is open until 22.30 hours weekdays and until 21.30 hours on Sundays so there would be other traffic until those hours.

Traffic

36. The applicant advises that the facility would be made available to the community in line with the national commitment to encourage shared use of school facilities. As a result, the impact of this on the local highway network has to be considered, especially that Development Plan policies seek that development shall be well served by public transport, walking and cycling and adequate vehicle parking facilities are provided including cycling storage.
37. The school is well positioned in relation to public transport and residential areas so people will have choice of travel to the site. Also, whilst the development would generate new traffic to the site, it is considered that the risk of unacceptable impacts on the public highway is unlikely. 42 new spaces for car parking are proposed as part of the development and would be accessed via the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Land and the Youth and Sport Centre off Floyd Close. This car park is thought to be able to accommodate all visitors travelling by car or bike. An Agreement would be signed between the parties securing the vehicular access to the new car parking. The School advised that the existing car park can accommodate 60 cars but this is already shared in the evenings and weekends with the Sports Centre and used during weekends at events for the school. The Area Transportation Manager raised no objection to the proposal and I support his view.

Conclusion

38. Overall, I believe that the school would benefit from having the new improved facility, which would provide better access to a range of sporting activities. I consider that the siting and design of the artificial turf pitch would be of high quality although would detract slightly from the open character of the existing school playing fields and add to other surrounding urban edge features. However, I do not expect this to have a significant detrimental effect on the local landscape character. The pitch would be provided on the edge of the built up area of Tunbridge Wells and therefore accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. The fact that the pitch would be located in the rural fringe limits the number of properties affected by the scheme and helps to protect residential amenity. That would be more difficult to achieve in a more urbanised area. It is recognised that there is a great shortage of high quality sports facilities open to the community in the Borough and also that there would be a health benefit from better sports provision. Consequently, I advise that the proposed development would not conflict with the general principles of the Development Plan Policies and I recommend that the permission be granted subject to appropriate conditions.

Recommendation

39. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering:
- Standard time limit;
 - The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
 - School's changing facilities shall be kept available for use after school hours, unless other arrangement is secured;

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- Details of the cycling storage shall be submitted for approval and then it shall be installed before the commencement of use of the pitch;
- The new car park should not be used until the floodlit pitch is built.
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the lighting and other details specified in the application and not varied without prior written approval of KCC planning.
- No trees shall be removed without County Planning Authority approval and a Tree protection plan to be submitted
- Landscaping scheme details, including bund details, (existing vegetation along the bank to the east of the pitch should be strengthened through further planting and additional planting should be incorporated along the existing bank to the south of the pitch and extended along the western extent of the pitch), illustration of the changes in topography in relation to the existing banks and existing vegetation to be submitted;
- Light levels shall not exceed the levels applied for.
- Hours of use for the pitch and the floodlighting to be restricted to 09.00 and 22.00 hours Mondays to Fridays, 10.00 and 20.00 hours on Saturdays, 10.00 and 18.00 hours Sundays and no use on Bank Holidays
- Lighting shall not be in use when the pitch is not in use;
- Community Use agreements to be submitted and approved;
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details.

Case Officer – Anna Michalska-Dober

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Background documents –See section heading
