

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 proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

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**Item D1**

**Construction of new 3G synthetic turf multi-use games area and installation of fencing and access path, Bidborough Primary School, Spring Lane, Bidborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 0UE – TW/22/3310 (KCC/TW/0197/2022)**

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A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 15 March 2023.

Application by Bidborough Primary School for a 3G synthetic turf MUGA pitch and the installation of fencing and access path – Bidborough Primary School, Spring Lane, Bidborough, TN3 0UE (Ref: KCC/TW/0197/2022 and TW/22/3310).

**Recommendation:** Planning permission to be granted, subject to conditions.

**Local Member:** Mr McInroy

**Classification:** Unrestricted

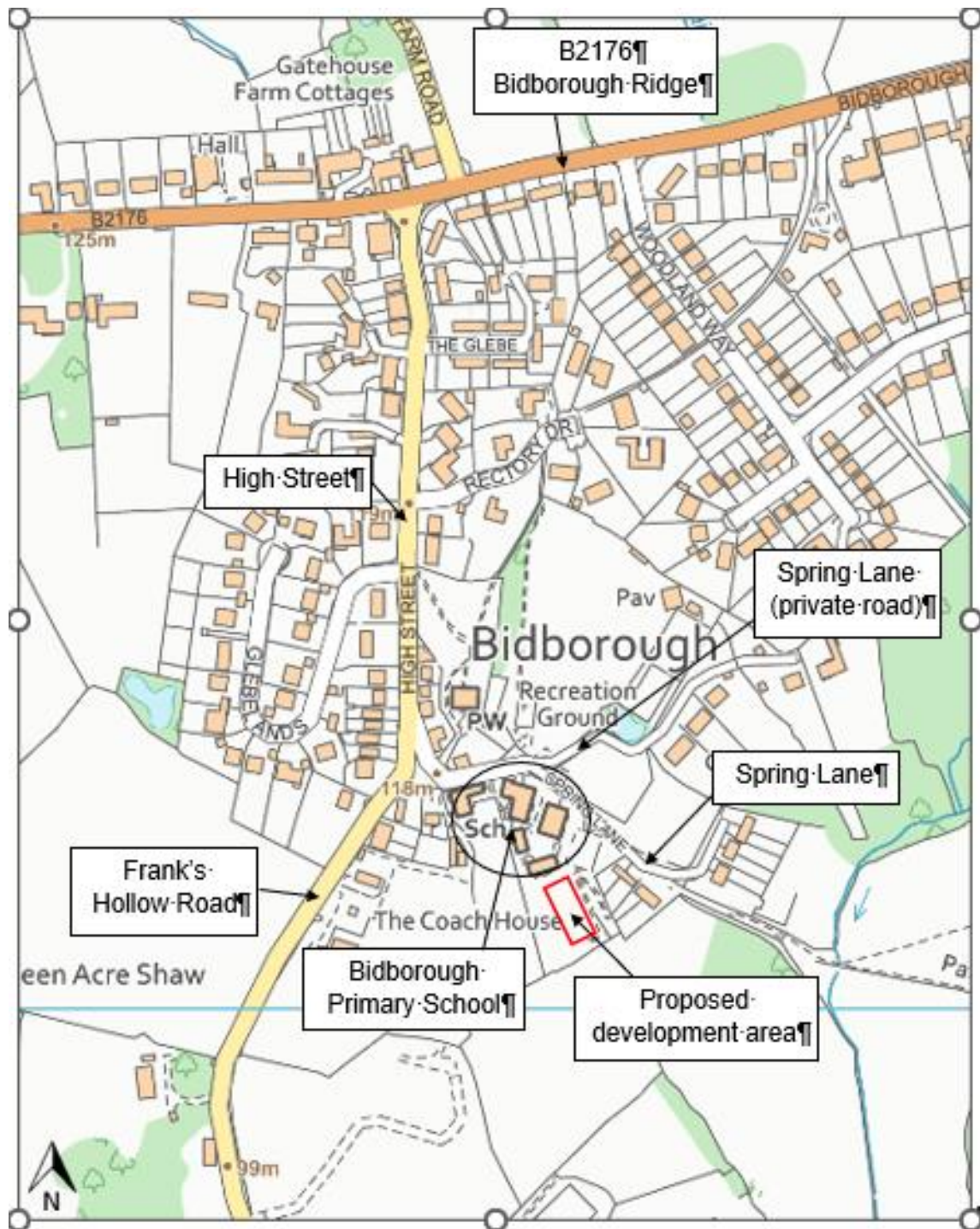
**Site**

1. Bidborough Church of England Primary School is located off Spring Lane in Bidborough, Tunbridge Wells. Bidborough is located to the north of Tunbridge Wells and is located off the A26 London Road which is the main road between Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. Spring Lane, which is a steep single track no through road, is accessed off the High Street/Frank's Hollow Road and provides access to a small number of properties, the School, allotments, and a recreation ground, as well as a play area located in the Peter Roberts field. Near to the main vehicular entrance to the school, there is a private road leading off Spring Lane, which is also labelled as Spring Lane. Please see the Site Location Plan.
2. The school buildings are located to the north and the higher part of the school site and the school's playing field, and hard playground are located to the south and the lower part of the site. The area around the existing playing field is bordered by mature trees to the west and south, and residential properties to the east.
3. The whole of the school site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is also adjacent to the Bidborough Conservation Area and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, both of which are located to the southern and western boundaries of the school site. The School House and the Old School is a Grade II Listed Building. There are also a number of Listed Buildings located in the vicinity of the school, including St Lawrence's Church.

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## Site Location Plan



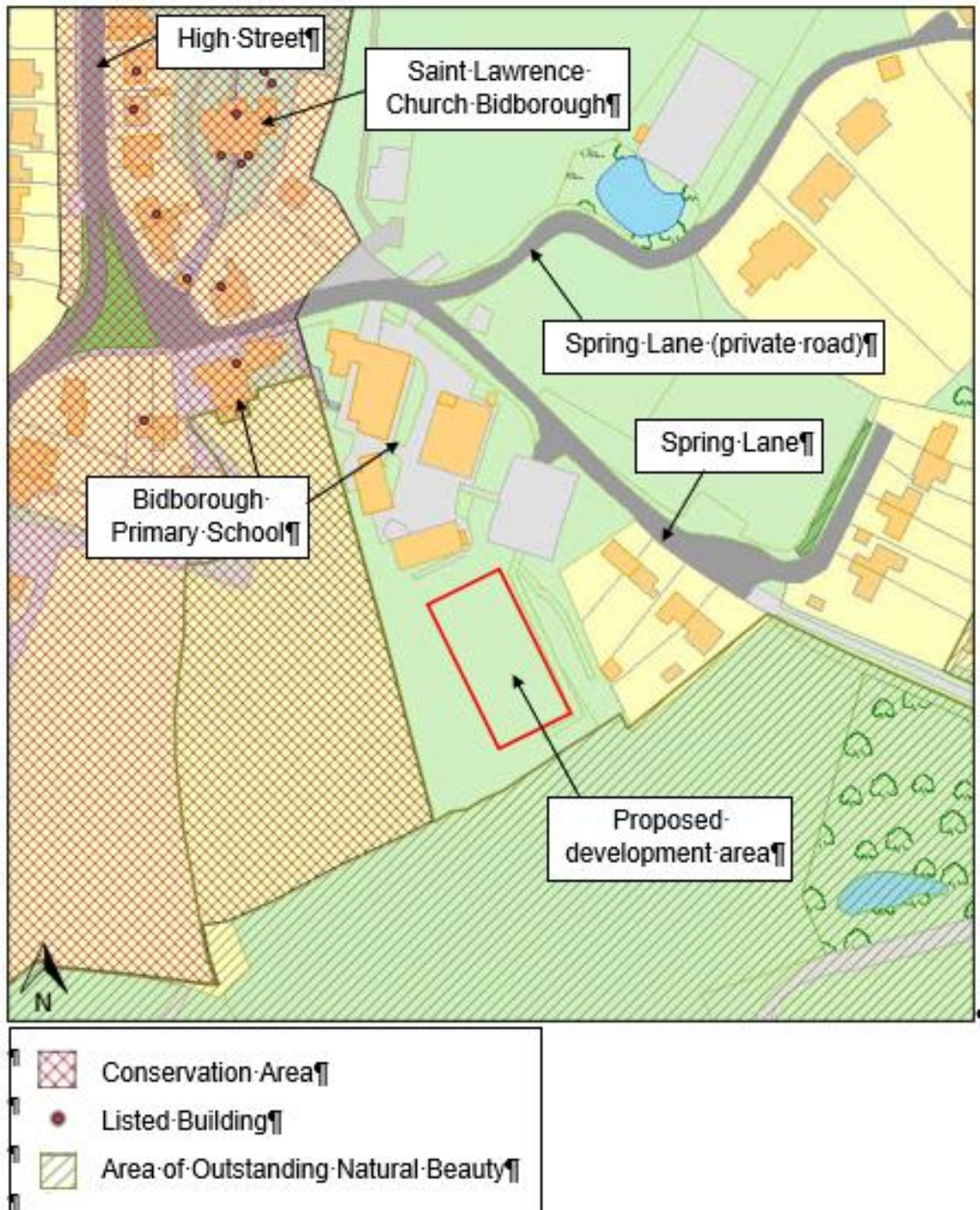


## Item D1

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### **Site Location Plan showing the Bidborough Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and AONB**

Site Plan -- Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



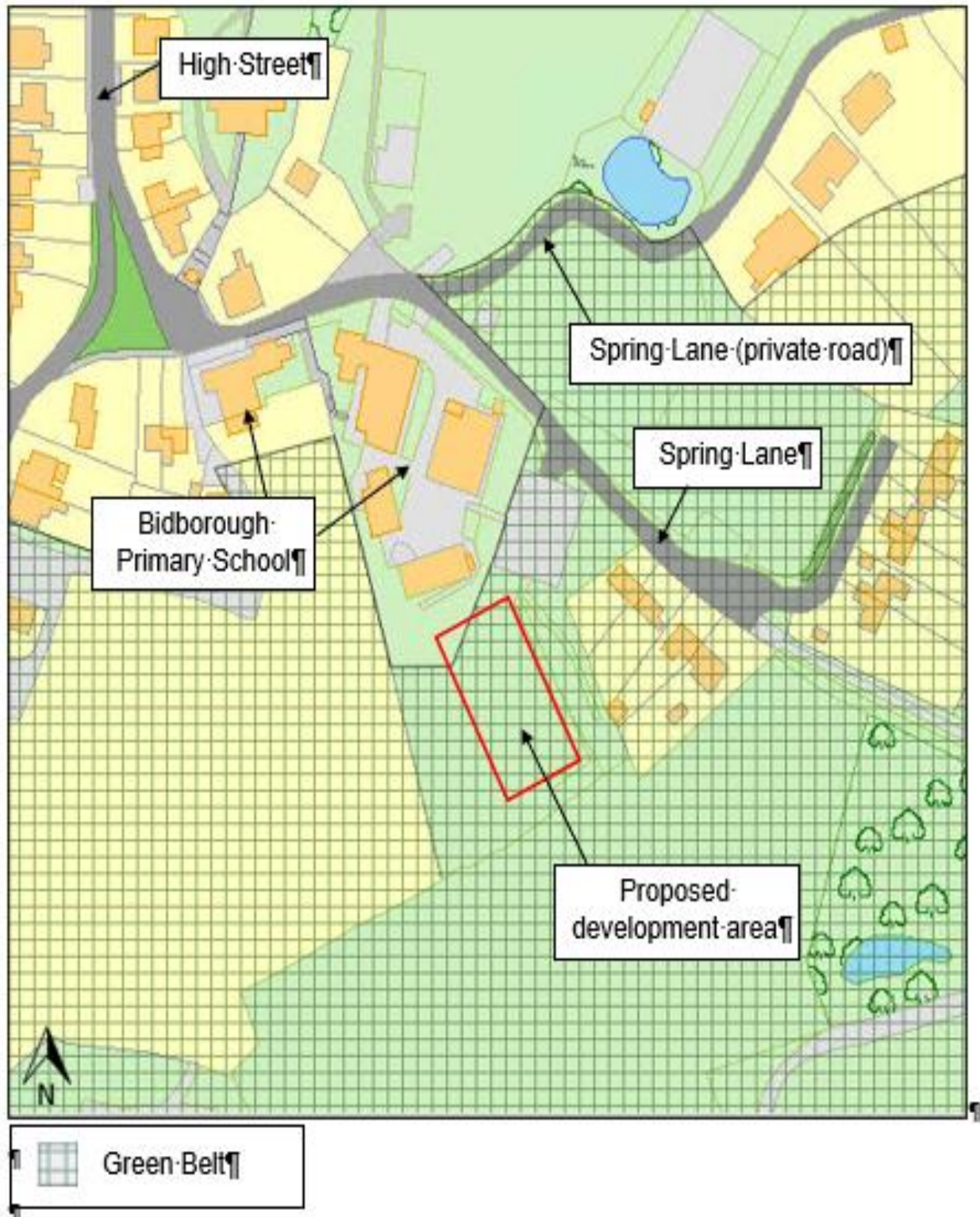


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### Site location plan showing the Green Belt

Site-Plan--Green-Belt



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### Site Location Plan

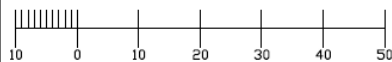


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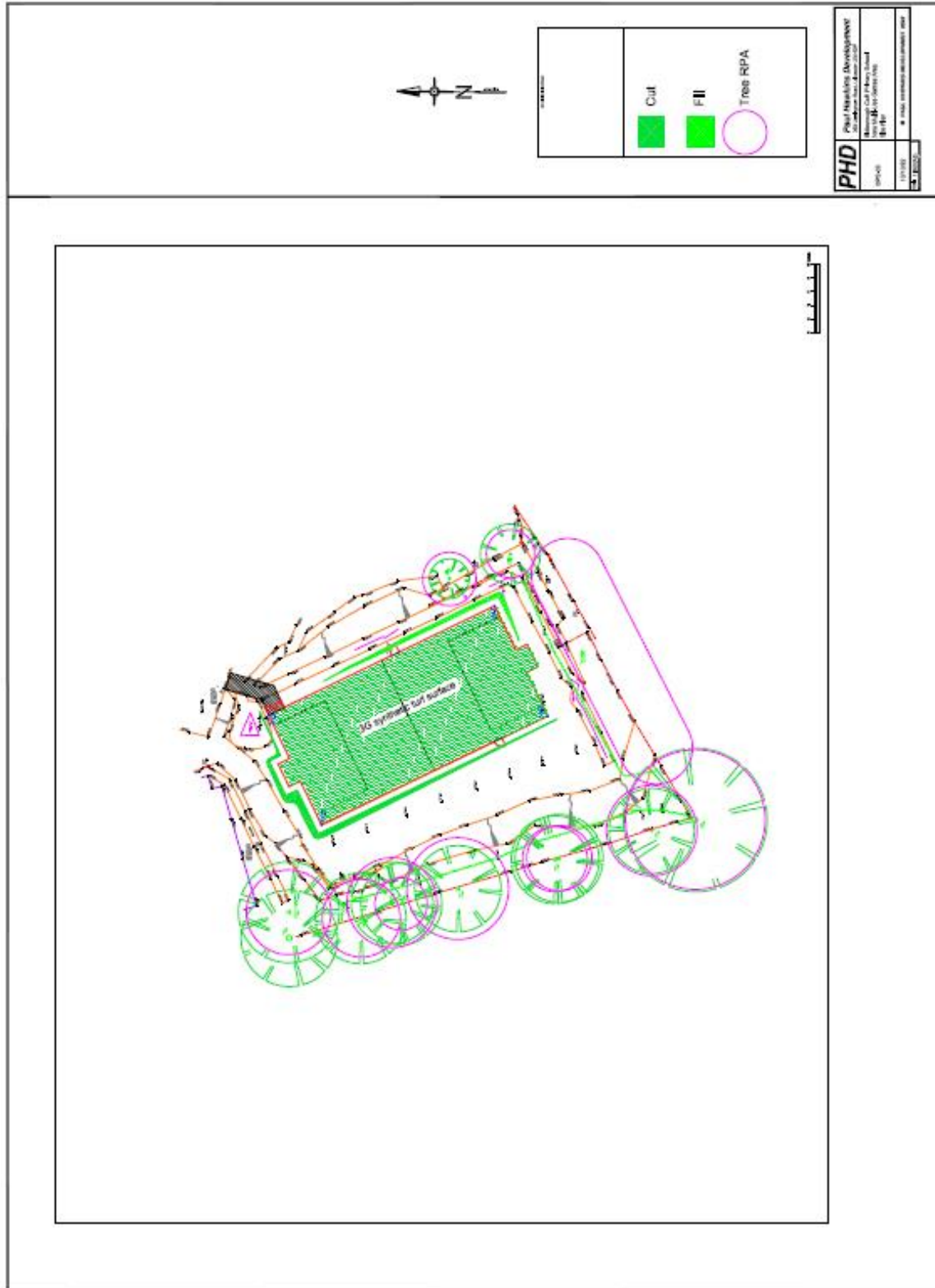
- Extent of School land
- Site area of proposed development

<b>PHD</b>	<b>Paul Hawkins Development</b> <small>365 Coppingham Road, Leicestershire LE15 4DP</small>
	Bidborough CoE Primary School New Multi-Use Games Area Location Plan
BPS-02	01/10/22
<small>Scale: 1:1000(A4)</small>	© PAUL HAWKINS DEVELOPMENT 2022

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### Site Plan



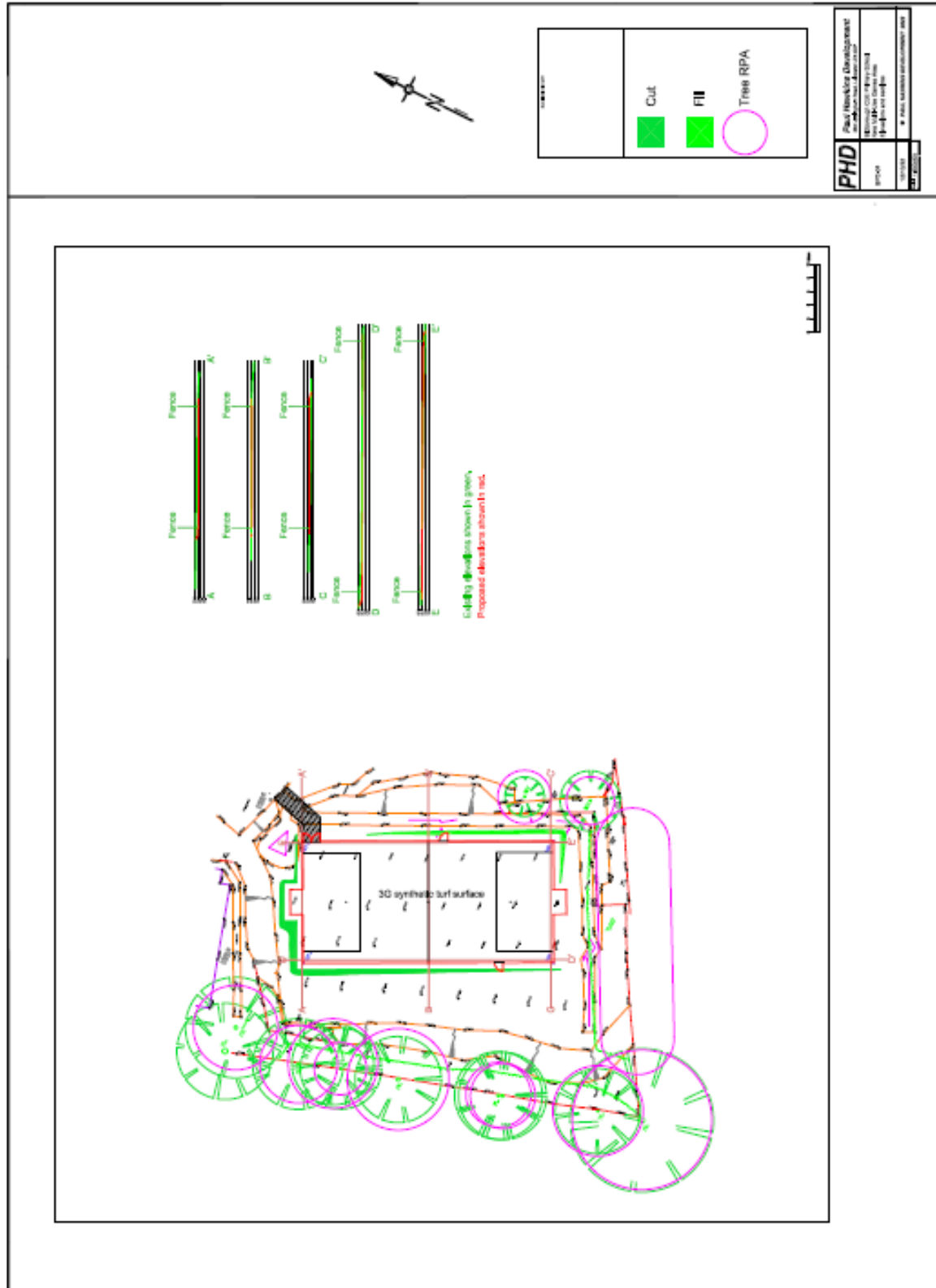




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### Elevations and Sections Plan





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Aerial photographs of school site with the proposed MUGA



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#### **Background**

3. Bidborough Church of England Primary School is an oversubscribed school admitting pupils from nearby villages and Tonbridge. It is a 1 form of entry (FE) school with 208 pupils aged 4 to 11 years old. The School has no plans to expand the current Pupil Admission Number (PAN). Currently there are around 30 members of staff at the school, many of whom work part time. There are 9 staff parking spaces at the school and 2 disabled parking spaces located to the front of the school in Spring Lane.
4. The School occupies an ad-hoc range of buildings on a steeply sloping site. There are steep steps between classrooms, leading to the school hall, which is located on the lower level. The reception class is in the original classroom at the top. The school office is in an outbuilding across the small playground at the top of the slope. The main playground, to which reception pupils are led up and down the steps, is on the lower level.
5. The school currently has a hard netball court marked out on the school's main playground and a natural turf playing field but the School has confirmed that they would like to be able to make more use of the playing field to play other competitive games, and to support the physical activity curriculum and as well as being used by Bidbor'Out! the school's breakfast and after-school provider. Bidbor'Out is run by parents of children who attend Bidborough Primary School.
6. A planning application was approved in 2002 for a playground extension which also included proposals to level out the existing sloping playing field and to improve the drainage. The School advise that these works have proved to be unsuccessful and the use of the playing field has become increasingly difficult. During the winter months the field is waterlogged and during the summer months the surface is firm, uneven and deemed unsafe to play on. Despite numerous attempts to improve the playability of the field it still remains unplayable for some 10 months of the year. Due to the numerous attempts to recover the field the School has decided to look at an artificial surfacing option.
7. Currently the pupils are having to use a small playground area the size of a 7v7 junior pitch and as they do not have access to the grass playing field due to the poor conditions of the field for most of the year. Participation in recreational sports within the school community is high but the existing grass facilities are a limiting factor and there is a very restricted amount of space available for recreation or curriculum-based learning.
8. Day to day, the school use is affected by the lack of space. The school has to stagger break and lunchtimes as they only have use of the small playground for most of the year. This also leaves the school with no space for additional enrichment sporting activities. As the pupils are sharing a smaller space, the school has to limit the activities that they can do with the pupils playing football or netball during the week on a rota basis. As a result, this means that the school cannot provide the government guidance of 'at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day' for all children.
9. The school playing field is bordered by 4 properties to the east and due to the level changes between the playing field and these properties, the playing field can only be viewed from the upper storeys. Surrounding the schools playing field on the southern and western borders and partially on the eastern border (and in front of some of the 4 properties) is a band of mature trees.

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**Recent Planning History**

10. The most relevant recent site planning history is listed below;

TW/21/3157	Proposed pathway and fencing improvements to facilitate safer pedestrian access. Withdrawn.
TW/11/705	Erection of 6.0m flagpole with 'Eco-Schools' Green Flag, following successful achievement of Green Flag status. Granted with conditions.
TW/09/3092	Erection of a canopy with opaque polycarbonate roof, supported on six white posts. Granted with conditions.
TW/08/2608	Outdoor classroom - A pergola style structure, open on all sides with a pitched roof. Withdrawn.
TW/06/3338	To utilize the area to the hall/dining block to provide a fully disabled toilet, large store, and new entrance to the hall. Granted with conditions.
TW/03/2537	Extension to provide new staffroom, visitor's entrance and group teaching space. Relocate headteacher and staff administration rooms to the existing main block. Granted with conditions.
TW/03/501	Moving the existing vehicular entrance to separate the pedestrian and vehicle access to the school site, renewing fencing along the boundary at the same height as existing fence. Granted with conditions.
TW/02/1222	Extension of playground to develop an unused area of grassland and to flatten the playing field, incorporating suitable drainage, and to fence the sports area [playground] to a height of approximately 3 metres. Granted with conditions.

**Proposal**

11. The planning application has been submitted by Bidborough Primary School and proposes the construction of a 3G synthetic turf multi-use games area (MUGA) and the installation of fencing, lockable gates and access path. It is proposed to locate the MUGA on the footprint of the natural turf playing field. The area of the proposed MUGA would measure 37m x 18m with a green coloured synthetic turf surface and is proposed to be marked out with white lines primarily for mini soccer. The MUGA is proposed to be surrounded by a 3m high dark green twin bar rebound fence and lockable gates to ensure that the facility is used correctly by authorised personnel only, as well as to prevent ball loss and surface contamination from the 3G synthetic turf.



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12. The proposed MUGA is on the footprint of the natural turf playing field, which was the subject of the 2002 planning application (listed in paragraph 10 above) which proposed to level the land to create a more suitable playing field. The current proposal also includes a porous macadam path to be created from the existing playground to the entrance of the MUGA and this would remove any requirement for the pupils to walk on the grass when it is wet or muddy.
13. The applicant has stated that there is little room for manoeuvre in the design of the playing surface itself, since dimensions and gradients are fixed by the Sport Governing Bodies. The proposed construction would be based on a balanced cut and fill (approx. 300m of cut and 200mm of fill) to minimise the impact on the environment and the need for import or export of subsoil.
14. Furthermore, the applicant has confirmed that the pitch has been positioned to facilitate easy access, whilst eliminating the need for any mature tree removal, and avoiding any damage to the existing trees to the west and south of the proposed development. An Arboricultural Assessment has been submitted to accompany the planning application and the applicant has confirmed that all the recommendations within this report would be complied with in full.
15. The applicant has confirmed that the proposed fencing and steelwork would be finished in a dark green powder coated colour so to be as 'invisible' as possible against the backdrop of the area surrounding it. The proposed fence would be 3m high and the gates would be lockable. Access for emergency vehicles would be from the existing access located off Spring Lane. It is also proposed that the construction access would be from Spring Lane and across the existing playground. If planning permission was to be granted, then it is proposed to carry out the work during the school summer holidays. Any disturbed areas are proposed to be re-instated to their original condition following construction of the proposed MUGA. The playing surface of the pitch is proposed to consist of infilled synthetic turf above specialist macadam, which would be porous to rainwater. The surface would be constructed and perform to the requirements of a BSEN15330-1 (surfaces designed primarily for football), and the SAPCA code of practice for the Construction of Outdoor Multi-Use Games Areas Type 8 MUGA (2014).
16. The entire structure, consisting of playing surface, base and stone sub-base would be fully permeable. During heavy rainfall, the stone base would act as a water storage medium with a slow-release rate. The drainage characteristics would therefore be similar to the existing natural turf. The drainage design is compatible with SUDS requirements. Additionally, all construction materials would be inert to prevent pollution of surface water.
17. No existing trees or their root protection areas (RPA's) would be affected by the proposed development. It is also not proposed to add or change the existing parking spaces on the site, nor the existing access routes. There is no proposal to increase pupils' numbers or staff numbers as a result of this planning application. There are also no floodlights, or any other lighting proposed as part of the planning application.
18. The applicant has confirmed that the proposed 3G artificial turf MUGA is to be used for school use only and by its breakfast and after-school provider, Bidbor'Out, which reflects current arrangements. There are no proposals to hire the MUGA to community groups outside of school hours or during the school holidays. Therefore, the proposed hours of use of the MUGA have been confirmed to be Monday to Friday

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between 0800 and 1800 hrs. Outside of the school day, it is proposed that the MUGA would be available for use by the School's breakfast and after-school club Bidbor'Out. On a Saturday the proposed hours would be between 0800 and 1600 hrs and this would be by the school, and directly for school organised use, such as use by parents for special events such as birthday parties of the children at the school. At present, parents are able to book the hall, playground and playing field for this type of event. That use is proposed to continue with the MUGA but would not be any greater in extent than that already taking place.

19. Currently Sunday use of the school site between the hours of 0800 and 1600 hrs is limited to the church's children's groups and (occasionally) a birthday party for a child in the School as detailed above. If the playing field is unavailable as a result of weather conditions, use is made of the small playground at present. It is not proposed to change any of the existing arrangements. In the school holidays (Easter and Summer) the School currently offers activity days (not every day), run by a member of the School staff, which makes use of the playing field and playground (alongside many other facilities in the school). The School anticipates continuing to do this, but not increasing it, using the MUGA in place of the field or playground. This is open only to pupils of the school. Hours of use would be 0800 to 1800hrs as at present. There are no proposals to use the MUGA on bank holidays.

#### **Planning Policy Context**

20. The most relevant Government Guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are appropriate to the consideration of this application:
- (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021** and the **National Planning Policy Guidance** (first published in March 2014), sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England, at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The guidance is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications but does not change the statutory status of the development plan which remains the starting point for decision making. However, the weight given to development plan policies will depend on their consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the development plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way, and decision takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are of particular relevance:

- Achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Taking a positive approach to applications that make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space and making decisions that promote an effective use of land while

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safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions;

- Ensure that planning policies and decisions provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, by planning positively for the provision and use of shared spaces and community facilities such as sports venues or open spaces to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
- Planning policies and decisions should prevent unacceptable risks from pollution and land instability and should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location;
- The great importance the Government attaches to Green Belts, with the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including the conserving and enhancing of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

In addition, Paragraph 95 states that: *The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools.*

- (ii) **Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (15 August 2011)** which sets out the Government's commitment to support the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. In particular, the Policy states that the Government wants to enable new schools to open, good schools to expand and all schools to adapt and improve their facilities. This will allow for more provision and greater diversity of provision in the state funded school sector, to meet both demographic needs, provide increased choice and create higher standards.

(iii) **Development Plan Policies**

(iii) **Tunbridge Wells Borough-Local Plan 2006 (Saved Policies):**

**Policy MGB1**

States the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt will be preserved and no development which would conflict with the purposes of including land within it will be permitted. Within the Metropolitan Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted other than for:

- (1) The construction of a new building or buildings for one of the following purposes:



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(b) essential facilities for outdoor sport or recreation which preserves the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes.

- Policy EN1** Seeks all proposals to be compatible in nature and intensity with neighbouring uses and not cause significant harm to character and amenities of the area in terms of daylight, sunlight, privacy, noise or excessive traffic generation. Seeks the design of the proposal to respect the context of the site and not cause significant harm to residential amenities.
- Policy EN5** Seeks to ensure that proposals for development within, or affecting the character of, a conservation area, will only be permitted if the proposal would preserve or enhance the buildings, related spaces, vegetation and activities which combine to form the character and appearance of the area.
- Policy EN15** Seeks to prohibit proposals that would have adverse impact upon the nature conservation interest.
- Policy EN16** Seeks to ensure that there is no adverse or unacceptable impact on the water quality or potential yield of groundwater.
- Policy EN25** Seeks to ensure that outside of the Limits to Built Development, that all proposals for development would have a minimal impact on the landscape character of the locality, would have no detrimental impact on the landscape setting of settlements, would not result in unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane, and new buildings should be located adjacent to existing buildings or well screened by vegetation.
- Policy R1** Seeks to ensure that proposals would not result in the loss of recreation open space and would only be permitted where no deficiency in accessible open space in that area.

#### **(iv) Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy 2010**

- Core Policy 2** Seeks to ensure that the boundaries of the Green Belt are defined and that there will be a general presumption against inappropriate development that would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, or which would conflict with the purpose of including land within it. Any new development should accord with national guidelines.
- Core Policy 4** Seeks to ensure that the Borough's built and natural environments, which are rich in heritage assets, landscape value and biodiversity, are conserved and enhanced.
- Core Policy 5** The Borough Council will apply and encourage sustainable design and construction principles and best practice. Developments should also be of high quality design, creating

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safe, accessible, and adaptable environments, whilst conserving and enhancing the public realm.

**Core Policy 9** Development must conserve and enhance the landscape and heritage and biodiversity assets of Royal Tunbridge Wells, including the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to secure its special character in the long term. The general extent of the Green Belt will be maintained for the Plan period.

**(v) Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan - Submission Local Plan – submitted October 2021**

**Policy STR2** Place Shaping and Design. All new development must aim to meet high standards of urban and architectural design.

**Policy STR8** Conserving and Enhancing the Natural, Built and Historic Environment. Development is expected to make a positive contribution to the natural, built, and historic environment of the borough. Within the area designated as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and its setting, development will be managed in a way that seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, commensurate with the "great weight" afforded to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the NPPF.

**Policy STR9** Green Belt. Inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as defined in the NPPF, will have to demonstrate very special circumstances which will need to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm (Development in the Green Belt is considered inappropriate unless it meets the exceptions set out in the NPPF July 2021, paragraph 149).

**Policy EN4** Historic Environment. All new development shall contribute to the overall conservation and, where possible, enhancement, of the historic environment of the borough.

**Policy EN5** Heritage Assets. Any development that might directly or indirectly affect the significance of a conservation area, will be required to submit a heritage statement. This includes development affecting their setting.

**Policy EN19** The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. All development within, or affecting the setting of, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) shall seek to conserve and enhance its landscape and scenic beauty, having particular regard to the impacts on its character components.

**Policy OSSR 1** Retention of Open Space. Existing open space, sports, and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, as defined on the Policies Map, unless allocated for another

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purpose/use/development in this Local Plan, should be retained and not be built on.

**Consultations**

21. **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:** Raises no objection to the planning application.

**Bidborough Parish Council:** Raises no objection to the planning application but did express concern over the size of the MUGA, visibility from the road and potential for community use which would not be welcomed.

**Kent Highways:** Raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions including no delivery movements to take place before 0900 hrs or between 1415 -1530 hrs; work is carried out is in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan, and no community use (beyond the school and afterschool club). Informatives have also been requested reminding the applicant that permits will be required for any traffic management arrangements and that this needs to be arranged via the Streetworks Team and that a letter drop is undertaken to affected residents including the church.

**KCC's Conservation Officer:** Raises no objection and has the following comments to make:

"The proposed MUGA is located on an existing sports field to the south of the school which is outside the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area and is well screened with mature trees on the west, south and south east sides. Due to the geography of the site, the construction of a MUGA in this location would have no impact on the setting of the Conservation Area or the Listed Buildings in the vicinity.

Any harmful impacts on the AONB would also be negligible, as the proposed formalisation of this enclosed area, which is already in use as a sports field and sits adjacent to an existing sports court, does not constitute a major change from the existing use. The visual impact of the dark green mesh fence is low, as is the synthetic turf finish which would be little different in appearance to the existing grassed surface. No visually intrusive floodlighting or other ephemera is proposed.

For these reasons, we do not wish to raise any objection to the proposals".

**KCC's Biodiversity Officer:** Raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions including a pre-commencement condition requiring a Biodiversity Method Statement to be included within a revised Construction Environmental Management Plan. A further condition is also required for a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan to be submitted within 3 months of the date of planning permission being granted.

**KCC's Drainage Officer:** Raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions including a pre-commencement condition requiring a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme to be submitted and to demonstrate that an effective outfall for surface water is provided for the development layout. A further condition is also required for a Verification Report to be submitted prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted.

**High Weald AONB:** No response has been received.



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**Sport England:** Due to the small size of the proposed MUGA, Sport England will not be providing comments for the following reason:

“The proposed development does not fall within either our statutory remit (Statutory Instrument 2015/595), or non-statutory remit (National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Par. 003 Ref. ID: 37-003-20140306), therefore Sport England has not provided a detailed response in this case.”

**Local Member**

22. The local County Member Mr McInroy was notified of the application on 10 December 2022. The following comments have been received:

“I am very happy to support the application, of which I was aware, and to write to the Planning Applications Committee if required”.

**Publicity**

23. This application was advertised by the placing of a press advertisement in the Kent Messenger paper on 17 November 2022. A total of 5 site notices were also posted in various locations in Spring Lane. 3 site notices were posted in front of the school buildings, and a further 2 site notices were posted in front of properties 1 to 4 Spring Lane.

**Representations on the planning application**

24. Letters of representation have been received both in opposition to the planning application and in support. A total of 5 representations have been received, with 4 representations in support (one support representation did also have a concern) and 1 representation objecting to the planning application, and which can be summarised as follows:

**Support**

- Fully support the proposed MUGA as this would ensure that the pupils would have better opportunities for sport and exercise because at the moment the field is simply too wet in the winter and too hard and dry in the summer. This affects the pupil's access to PE lessons and to enjoy the schools grounds at break and lunchtimes.
- It would improve the sports facilities of the school.
- It will give all year round access to enable children to maintain a good level of fitness which is good for the pupils educational needs and wellbeing.

**Support but also raised concern**

- This would be a concern if the sports field was to be hired out on a commercial basis outside of school hours. Vehicular traffic and parking are real issues in the vicinity of the school and the road down to the school is single track. Therefore, too many cars would present a health and safety risk. The School have an excellent policy of trying to enforce how parents park during school hours, but our concern would be that the users had no connection to the school, outside of school hours, and so users would have little regard for others safety.

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#### **Object**

- While we have no objection to the field being replaced with a synthetic pitch, subject to proper drainage facilities, but object to the erection of the fencing and gates.
- It is completely incorrect to state that this would have no visual impact on the surrounding area or the openness of Metropolitan Green Belt, quite the opposite.
- The site is raised above the level of the back gardens of properties 1 - 4 Spring Lane and is most visible from the bedrooms of these properties.
- The school recently erected a large close board wooden fence along the boundary of the playing field and adjacent properties which would not block out the much larger metal fence.
- The fencing would also be visible from the road.
- It will be overbearing and obtrusive on such a small site and not required in order to enhance and improve facilities for the school children.
- This type of fencing would be required for secondary schools and at club level not necessary for a primary school bearing in mind the very significant costs involved.
- Careful consideration needs to be given as to how the field will not be waterlogged if a synthetic surface is simply being placed over the existing field and to ensure that run off does not then discharge into the neighbouring gardens.
- The fence is deemed necessary to play 5 aside football which the school does not currently do. The school children have a football team and an after-school football club, but it now appears that by caging the area it would potentially be able to hire the pitch on a commercial basis.
- Accepted that living next to a school means that you have a certain level of noise and disruption, it is generally consigned to the school day and not during school holidays evenings or weekends.
- It would make the school a more attractive proposition for out of school clubs and parties bringing more traffic to the lane.
- The school has never entertained a football club on a Saturday.
- If the application is granted for the synthetic pitch, it should only be used by the school for school activities and not by third parties on a commercial basis.
- It will be overbearing and obtrusive on such a small site and not required in order to enhance and improve facilities for the school children.

#### **Discussion**

25. In considering this proposal regard must be had to Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (20) above. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, this proposal needs to be considered in the context of Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity.
26. This application is being reported for determination by the Planning Applications Committee due to a letter of representation received from a local resident objecting to the planning application. In this case the key determining factors, in my view, are the need and principle of development, Green Belt considerations, design and siting including the impact upon the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Bidborough Conservation Area, amenity impact including community use, traffic and parking and drainage. In the Government's view, the development of

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schools is strongly in the national interest and planning authorities should support this objective, in a manner consistent with their statutory obligations. In considering proposals for the improvement of schools, the Government considers that there is a strong presumption in favour of state funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework and reflected in the Policy Statement for Schools. Planning Authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling such development, attaching significant weight to the need to develop state funded schools, and making full use of their planning powers to support such development, only imposing conditions that are absolutely necessary and that meet the tests set out in paragraph 56 of the NPPF.

**Need and principle of development**

27. As outlined in paragraph 20 of this report, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the provision and retention of community facilities as a means of place making and promoting healthy and sustainable communities. Decisions should be made which guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. It should also ensure that established facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community.
28. The site is located on the periphery of the settlement boundary of Bidborough village and is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt, where the principle of development is controlled. The proposed development would be confined to the area of an existing grass playing field, which the applicant has confirmed is unusable for most of the year, with the field being waterlogged during the winter months and too hard and dry to use during the summer months. The applicant has sought to remedy this problem over many years, through the installation of a better drainage system, but unfortunately this has been unsuccessful. Therefore, the applicant has now decided to propose an artificial surfacing option.
29. The School has demonstrated that due to a lack of space, it is currently unable to provide the full quality PE curriculum. The school has stated that it must limit the activities that they provide so that pupils either play football or netball on a rota basis. This means that the School cannot provide the government guidance of 'at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day' for all pupils. As stated previously, the field is unusable from October until mid to late Spring, although there are a couple of months when the ground is firm underfoot and some PE activities can take place. However, due to the condition of the ground, the School has confirmed that it must be very mindful of the playing field's surface and undulation. If the weather then becomes too dry, then the School has to introduce further measures to keep the pupils safe as the ground becomes deceptively hard and this has led multiple wrist fractures in the past 5 years.
30. Support for improved school facilities is heavily embedded in the NPPF and the Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development, and I consider that the education need for the proposed development should be given significant weight in this instance. To ensure that the School can provide a full PE curriculum, in considering the above, I accept the need for the proposed development.



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**Green Belt Considerations**

31. The development falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt. In determining the application, consideration needs to be assessed against green belt policy that presumes against inappropriate development, unless very special circumstances are demonstrated. The representation from a local resident has expressed concern that the development would have an visual impact on the surrounding area and upon the openness of the Green Belt.
32. Development Plan policies seek to require developments to be sustainable, well designed and respect their setting. This is particularly relevant to this development site which is identified within the Development Plan as being within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Policy STR9 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan – submission Local Plan (submitted October 2021), and the NPPF requires that very special circumstances need to be demonstrated to outweigh harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm.
33. The NPPF, paragraph 138 states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:
  - a. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
  - b. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - c. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - e. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
34. The NPPF further states that “as with previous Green Belt Policy, inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF states that construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate within the Green Belt and goes on to list exceptions to this. Paragraph 149 b) of the NPPF lists the following as an exception.

*‘the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it’.*
35. As set out in paragraphs 11 to 19 of this report, this planning application is proposing to provide a 3G artificial turf MUGA with associated 3m high fencing. The area of the proposed MUGA would measure 37m x 18m with a green coloured synthetic turf surface and is proposed to be marked out with white lines primarily for mini soccer.
36. In terms of Green Belt policy, the provision of “appropriate” facilities, in connection with the existing use of land for outdoor sport’ is considered to be appropriate development within the Green Belt. This is on the proviso that the sports facilities would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it (as set out in paragraph 33 above).
37. The current playing field is used for outdoor sport and recreation, albeit the playing field is unusable for most of the year due to it being waterlogged during the winter months or too dry and hard during the summer months. The proposed 3G artificial turf MUGA would enable the School to use the existing playing field all year round rather than for a short few weeks. The proposed 3G artificial turf MUGA are clearly

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facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, so could be argued to fall under the definition of appropriate development within the Green Belt. However, in my view, the proposed fencing and surfacing, are urbanising features which could have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt, potentially conflicting with the purposes of including land within it. Therefore, by virtue of the criteria set out in the NPPF, I consider this element of the proposed development to be inappropriate in Green Belt terms.

38. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and it is for the applicant to demonstrate why permission should be granted with regard to planning policies and other material considerations. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the impact of the development against Green Belt Policy, to consider the impact on the openness of the Green Belt and whether or not there are very special circumstances that would warrant setting aside the general presumption against inappropriate development.
39. A Planning Statement including Design and Access considerations was submitted in support of this planning application. This sets out what the applicant considers to be the very special circumstances that warrant setting aside the general presumption against what would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is considered the following 'very special circumstances' are sufficient to collectively outweigh a Green Belt policy objection:
- i) The educational need for the development;
  - ii) The provision of improved facilities; and
  - iv) The quality of the design and level of mitigation proposed would ensure that the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited.

The educational need for the development

40. As outlined in paragraph 20 of this report, great emphasis is placed within planning policy generally and specifically in paragraph 95 of the NPPF, on the need to create, expand or alter schools. The NPPF states that Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. The Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development (15 August 2011) also sets out the Government's commitment to support the development and expansion of state funded schools to adapt and improve their facilities. There is a presumption in favour of the development of state funded schools and their facilities expressed in both the NPPF and the Policy Statement – Planning for Schools Development.
41. The applicant considers that the educational need for adequate sports facilities to serve the primary school, as the existing playing field is unusable for most of the year coupled with the fact the sports field would continue to be a used for sport, and its appearance would be similar to the existing grass, should be attributed significant weight in assessing the proposal. The proposal would provide a fit for purpose 3G artificial turf MUGA, representing the opportunity to significantly improve the quality and variety of sport and recreation available to the school. The applicant states that the existing playing field suffers from severe water logging during the winter season and is also unusable during the summer months due to the surface being too hard and dry, which makes it unusable for any kind of sport or recreation activities. It would give the school an additional much needed surfaced play area for the pupils to

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use during break times throughout the whole year and is development that supports and enables healthy lifestyles, as encouraged by the NPPF and Planning Policy. This would be a significant improvement over the current situation.

42. Based on the above, in my view, it is evident that the school would benefit from the provision of increased all weather sports facilities. Support for the development and improvement of facilities at state funded schools is heavily embedded in the NPPF, the Planning for School Development Policy Statement, and local Planning Policy, as is the need to plan positively for community facilities and sports provision, and I consider that the need for the development should be given significant weight in this instance.

Provision of improved facilities

43. As detailed above, this application would enable the applicant to provide additional sports facilities on the site, which would meet the needs of the school and is development that supports and enables healthy lifestyles, as encouraged by the NPPF and Planning Policy. The application would also provide sports facilities of an improved quality.
44. The applicant states for the reasons set out above, that the condition of the existing playing field is unsuitable for any kind of sport activities and the field is unusable for most of the year. The proposed 3G artificial turf MUGA would remedy this issue by providing an all-weather surface that can be used throughout the year.
45. Having considered the above, I am of the view that the proposal would offer improved sporting facilities not only of a higher standard but also a greater variety, supporting the curricula needs of the school. Such provision is supported by the NPPF which seeks the provision of sports facilities to achieve healthy, inclusive and sustainable school communities.

Impact on the Openness of the Green Belt

46. As set out above, the proposed 3G artificial turf MUGA is a facility for outdoor sport and recreation, so could be argued to fall under the definition of appropriate development within the Green Belt. However, in my view, the proposed fencing, and surfacing, are urbanising features which could have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt, potentially conflicting with the purposes of including land within it. The layout and detailed design of the proposals are therefore key in mitigating the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt.
47. The applicant advises that the site layout has been carefully designed to mitigate the impact from the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt. First, the proposal does not require any alterations to the wider site's existing extensive boundary landscaping. This would help maximise the screening afforded to the site. The fence is deemed necessary by the applicant and is proposed to be dark green in colour to help mitigate its visual impact and blend into the site, which is surrounded by mature trees on three sides and by the school to the remaining end. Therefore I consider that the facility would be well screened by existing boundary planting and have minimal visual impact on the surrounding area.
48. It is also of note that the proposed development, whilst having urbanising features such a fencing and surfacing, is an outdoor sports facility and would not be

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introducing any further buildings onto the site. The MUGA would also be sited on the existing school playing field, which is an established educational site, and would not impact upon the boundary planting and screening which demark and screen the site from the surrounding area.

49. In considering the above, I am satisfied that the proposed development would have a limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Whilst there is inevitably some impact on the Green Belt, I am satisfied that the 3G artificial turf MUGA would be contained within the immediate context of the existing development on site, and that the effect on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited. In my view, the proposed layout represents the option which strikes the best balance between minimising intrusion into the Green Belt and providing sufficient sporting facility to enable the school to deliver the curriculum and operate successfully.

Summary – Very Special Circumstances/Green Belt Considerations

50. It should be borne in mind that open sports facilities are a defined appropriate use within the Green Belt. It could be argued, therefore, that the development as proposed is appropriate for the purpose of Green Belt policy. However, in considering the provision of fencing and surfacing associated with the 3G artificial turf MUGA, I am of the opinion that those elements of the proposal represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt and have assessed the development as such.
51. Overall, I accept the applicant's assessment and application of Green Belt Policy as set out in the submitted documentation, and I have considered this in the context of the Development Plan Policy and the NPPF. The development is inappropriate development for the purposes of Green Belt consideration and is, therefore, by definition harmful. Nevertheless, in my view, the considerations summarised above are sufficient collectively to constitute 'very special circumstances' capable of outweighing harm, in this particular case. Furthermore, I accept that the siting of the proposals has been carefully considered to help mitigate the impact of the development on the functioning and openness of the Green Belt. Accordingly, I do not consider that an objection on Green Belt grounds would be warranted in this particular case.
52. Further, in assessing the need to refer the application to the Secretary of State for consideration on Green Belt grounds and having regard to the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, I do not consider that this application needs to be referred. The Direction requires inappropriate development to be referred where it consists of the provision of buildings where the floor space to be created is 1000 square metres or more, or any other development which, by reason of its scale or nature or location would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Due to the limited impact that the development would have on the openness of the Green Belt as a result of its size and scale, its location on the existing playing field and that it would be surrounded by mature trees, I consider that there is no requirement to refer the application in this particular case.

**Impact upon the adjacent Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB) and local Heritage Assets including the adjacent Conservation Area**

53. The proposed development site is adjacent to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Bidborough Conservation Area, both of which are

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located to the southern and western boundaries of the school site. Additionally, there are several Listed Buildings in the vicinity. The proposed 3G artificial turf MUGA would not physically abut the boundary of the AONB or the Conservation Area and to both the southern and western boundaries there is existing boundary and tree planting which would screen any direct views of the proposed 3m high fencing from the AONB and Conservation Area.

54. The County Council's Conservation Officer has raised no objection to this planning application and noted that the proposed MUGA would be located on an existing sports field to the south of the school which is outside the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area and is well screened with mature trees on the west, south and south-east sides. It was further noted that due to the geography of the site, the construction of a MUGA in this location would have no impact on the setting of the Conservation Area or the listed buildings in the vicinity.
55. Furthermore, it was noted that any harmful impacts on the AONB would be negligible in the Council's Conservation Officers view, as the proposed formalisation of this enclosed area, which is already in use as a sports field and sits adjacent to an existing sports court, does not constitute a major change from the existing use. The visual impact of the dark green mesh fence is low, as is the synthetic turf finish which would be little different in appearance to the existing grassed surface. It was also noted that no visually intrusive floodlighting is proposed.
56. The High Weald AONB Unit was consulted on this planning application but has not provided any comments. Therefore, taking into consideration the location of the proposed development, surrounding landscaping and local environs, and taking into account the comments received from the statutory consultees, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area or the setting of the AONB, and is in accordance with the underlying principles of the NPPF and Development Plan Policies.

**Design and Siting**

57. Objection has been received from a local resident regarding the proposed height of the 3m high fence and lockable gates. It is questioned why they are seen to be necessary to play 5 aside football, when the school does not currently do so. Concern has been raised that the 3m high fencing would be visible from the neighbouring bedroom windows of the properties that back onto the school site as the school site is raised above the level of these back gardens. Further concern has been raised that the proposed 3m high fencing would also be visible from Spring Lane.
58. The proposed location of the MUGA is the existing grass playing field which is currently unusable for the majority of the year due to the poor drainage. The applicant has stated that there is little room for manoeuvre in terms of the location or the design of the playing surface itself. Additionally this location would not require the removal of any of the mature trees which surround this location. As the site of the proposed MUGA is located on the area of the existing grass playing field and there are no other suitable or available locations within the school site to locate this facility, then I am satisfied that this location for the MUGA is acceptable in principle.



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59. The applicant has confirmed that the fence is necessary for a number of reasons. The provision of a 3m high fence is standard practice around a synthetic pitch such as the one that is being proposed and is specified for ball retention within the area, and to discourage unauthorised use of the facility, which could otherwise be a problem for both the school and its neighbours. The provision of the fencing has been designed in accordance with Sport England Design Guidance for Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sport, which refers to the Sport and Play Construction Association (SAPCA) Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Fencing Systems for Sports Facilities (COP).
60. A 3m high fence is considered to be the minimum necessary and normal standard for this type of facility. The requirement to have a fence around a 3G surfaced pitch is also to ensure that children would not access the synthetic surface directly from a surrounding grass area. That could result in contamination of the surface and consequential drainage and maintenance issues. On that basis, access to the 3G surfaced pitch must, therefore, be controlled. To ensure that there is no other cross contamination, a short section of footpath is proposed from the existing playground to the MUGA so that the pupils would not have to walk on the grass between the two playgrounds.
61. The MUGA would also be vital to enable other aspects of the PE curriculum to be taught, including tennis for example. Children at this age, particularly in Years 5 and 6, have increasing strength but not yet the skills to consistently control the balls. The School has confirmed that if the fencing was not sufficiently high enough, balls would frequently go over the fence and due to the location of the surrounding area, this would mean significant cost increase in maintaining and cleaning the new surface, as it would lead to mud and grass seeds being trampled back onto the MUGA surface after collecting the stray balls.
62. Visually, the majority of the playing field site is surrounded by mature trees which helps to integrate the development into the landscape. There would be limited visibility of the fencing from Spring Lane and from the upper storey of the residential properties adjoining the site. Along Spring Lane, there is an established evergreen hedge along the schools' boundary which affords good screening of the school site. There is a gate leading off Spring Lane to the existing fenced playground and this would be the location where the 3m high proposed fence might be viewed across this existing fenced playground. However I consider that as the site is surrounded by mature trees and limited views across the school site from Spring Lane, then the proposed 3m high fence should not cause overriding visual impacts to the surrounding area or be intrusive to the surrounding landscape. It should also be recognised that being able to see the fence is insufficient ground on which to refuse the planning application.
63. The fence has been deemed necessary to play 5-a-side football. It is proposed to be dark green in colour and the majority of the school playing field site is surrounded by mature trees so any fencing would be viewed with the trees in the background. The facility would mainly be visible from the school itself with a potential view from upper stories of the adjacent residential properties. I consider that the 3m high fence would not cause any loss of light, overlook nor overshadow. It's limited visual impact when balanced against other planning considerations is considered acceptable.
64. It should also be noted that the area of this planning application is already an existing sport playing field and it would continue to be a sport playing field. Therefore, the use

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of the site is already established. I accept that in terms of location there is little room to manoeuvre in the proposed design and location and that the proposed MUGA has been positioned to facilitate easy access to it, whilst eliminating the need for any mature tree removal and this avoiding damage or impediment to the existing trees to the west and south of the proposed development.

65. In light of the above, I consider the overall design and siting of the proposed MUGA to be suitable on this school site. I consider that the proposed development has considered and satisfies the requirements of the Local Plan Policies EN1, EN5, STR5 and Core Policy 5. I would not therefore raise a planning objection on this matter.

**Amenity Impacts – Community Use, Traffic and Parking**

66. Concern has been raised regarding the possible of use of the proposed MUGA by hiring it to community groups as a means of generating extra income for the school and the subsequent possibility of extra traffic and parking in Spring Lane.
67. The School has confirmed that there are no plans to hire the MUGA to external community groups and that the MUGA would be required for school use only and by its breakfast and after-school provider, Bidbor'Out. There are no plans for it to be used to generate an income stream. Therefore, the proposed hours of use of the MUGA have been confirmed to be Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800 hrs. Outside of the school day, it is proposed that the MUGA would be available for use by Bidbor'Out. On a Saturday the proposed hours would be between 0800 and 1600 hrs and this would be used by the school, and directly for school organised use, such as use by parents for special events such as birthday parties of the children at the school. Currently Sunday use of the school site between the hours of 0800 and 1600 hrs is limited to the church's children's groups and (occasionally) a birthday party for a child in the school as detailed above.
68. In the school holidays (Easter and Summer) the School currently offers activity days (not every day), run by a member of the School staff, which make use of the playing field and playground (alongside other facilities in the school). The School anticipates continuing to do this, but not increasing it, using the MUGA in place of the field or playground. This is open only to pupils of the school. Hours of use would be between 0800 to 1800 hrs as at present. This would be primarily to serve Bidborough School children and families. The School would not wish to stop doing this and so would not wish to restrict the usage hours in the school holidays for the MUGA (beyond 0800 to 1800 hrs) as the rest of the site (including playgrounds and other outside areas) has no restrictions.
69. It had been noted in the representation that the school does not currently use the playing field. This has been due to the current poor condition of the grass playing field, the School has not been able to use this playing field, resulting in outdoor activities undertaken on the existing small playground. If the proposed MUGA was to be granted planning permission, then the school would be able to use the MUGA rather than the smaller existing playground. The level of use of the proposed MUGA would remain similar to the current use of the existing smaller playground.
70. The School have confirmed that there would be no community use whereby the MUGA would be hired to external parties for profit and that the local resident has incorrectly linked the installation of fencing with the possible hiring of the pitch commercially. The School has confirmed that they are willing to accept a planning

## Item D1

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condition, if planning permission was granted, which states that there is no community use of the MUGA through the hiring to external parties. To ensure that the MUGA was purely used by the school for their purposes and not for commercial purposes, a planning condition is proposed.

71. Concern was also raised that there could be an increase in traffic and parking beyond normal school hours and days as a result of this proposed development. It should be noted that as it is not intended to hire out the MUGA to any external community groups, then there should be no change in traffic or parking issues around the existing school site, other than what is currently experienced. Kent Highways were consulted on this planning application and did not raise an objection to this proposal.
72. It should be noted that the playing field already exists at the school and that the proposal is to change the surface to an all-weather pitch, which would give the School all year access for recreation and curriculum-based learning. Whilst the current grass surface restricts the usage of the playing field, the proposed MUGA would allow the School to use the playing field as intended. Therefore, given that this area of the school site is already used for sports and recreation, I am satisfied that the development as proposed would not have an adverse impact on the privacy of local residents from overlooking.
73. Whilst the MUGA would provide more opportunity for use during the school day compared to the current grass playing field, I do not consider that an objection to school use on noise grounds would be justified bearing in mind the long-established educational use of the site. Neither do I consider that it would be justified in respect of the School's own use of the facilities outside of normal school hours, which already takes place on the playing field.
74. With regard to visual impact, concern was expressed regarding the impact of the fencing, and impeding views from the first floor windows. In considering the proposal, it is recognised that private views are not afforded planning protection and that the loss of a view is not a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. It is also important to note that the development is surrounded by tall trees and other vegetation, and so the proposed fencing should blend into the background, when viewed from any first floor windows.
75. Therefore, through the imposition of a planning condition restricting use of the facilities to those set out in the application, I consider that the proposed works would not result in unacceptable levels of usage, and that there should be no changes in the existing traffic levels in and around Spring Lane as well as no additional parking requirements. I also do not consider it would result in significant detriment to the local residents visual amenity and would therefore accord with the aims of the Local Plan and the NPPF in these respects. I therefore would not raise a planning objection on this matter.

#### **Construction**

76. Given that there are nearby residential properties, if planning permission is granted it would, in my view, be appropriate to impose a condition restricting hours of construction to protect residential amenity. I recommend that works should be undertaken only between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays. It is also good practice on school sites for contractors to be required under

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the terms of their contract to manage construction traffic/deliveries to minimise conflict with traffic and pedestrians at the beginning and end of the school day. I consider it appropriate to impose a condition requiring that no deliveries are allowed to the construction site before 0900 hrs and between 1415 and 1530 hrs during school term time.

77. Due to the vehicular access to the site being very constrained via Spring Lane, Kent Highways required at the planning application stage that careful consideration be given to access arrangements for delivery vehicles. Therefore the applicant was requested to submit a detailed Construction Environmental Management Team in liaison with Kent County Council's Streetworks Team, which needed to include, amongst other matters, the size of the vehicles delivering to the site and the proposed routing of these vehicles, the location of the site compound and operative/visitors parking, details of site security and safety measures, wheel washing facilities, dust suppression measures, and noise mitigation. The Highway Authority are satisfied with the submitted details and do not require the submission of any additional information regarding construction activities.
78. The Streetworks Team has also advised that should there be any traffic management associated with these works, then permits would be required. Therefore, it has been requested that an Informative be added, if planning permission is granted, so that if there are any streetworks queries these need to be raised directly via the streetworks email address. A further Informative has also been included which requested that the letter drop that is proposed as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan and informing residents of the proposed works, should also include the church.
79. Notwithstanding the above, the County Ecologist requires a Biodiversity Method Statement be included within a revised Construction Environmental Management Plan, and that this be submitted and approved by the planning authority. Therefore, should permission be granted, I consider it appropriate to impose a pre-commencement condition requiring an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan to include a Biodiversity Method Statement to be submitted for approval. Subject to the imposition of the conditions outlined above, I am satisfied that construction activities would not have a significantly adverse impact upon the amenity of the locality, ecological interests, or the local highway network. I would not therefore raise a planning objection on this matter.

**Drainage**

80. The applicant has confirmed that the site is within flood risk Zone 1, which is an area with a low probability of flooding. As the proposed surfacing is fully permeable, then there should be no dispersal of surface water to other areas. The entire structure, consisting of playing surface, base and stone sub-base would be fully permeable. During heavy rainfall, the stone base acts as a water storage medium with a slow release rate. The drainage characteristics would therefore be similar to the existing natural turf. The drainage design is compatible with SUDS requirements. Additionally, all construction materials would be inert to prevent pollution of surface water.
81. Due to the previous issues with the drainage at this location, Kent County Council's Drainage Engineer has been consulted on this planning application. It was noted that any surface water would drain to the southern end of the MUGA before infiltrating via a soakaway located there. Although no objection has been raised to this proposal by

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the Drainage Engineer, there would be a requirement for infiltration testing to be undertaken in accordance with BRE365 to confirm infiltration rates are suitable. These tests should be at the location and depth of the proposed feature and should be provided as part of the detailed design, secured via the imposition of a pre-commencement condition to require the submission of a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme prior to the commencement of the development. A further condition would require the submission of a verification report prior to first use of the MUGA. Subject to the imposition of these conditions, I would not raise a planning objection on this matter.

**Conclusion**

82. This application proposes the construction of a 3G synthetic turf multi-use games area (MUGA) and the installation of 3m high dark green twinbar rebound fencing, lockable gates and access path. The proposal has given rise to a variety of issues, including the need to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the impact of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt, as well as local residential amenity. I consider that 'very special circumstances' have been demonstrated in this particular case for overriding Green Belt policy considerations. I also consider that the development has been designed and sited to minimise the impact of the development on this part of the Green Belt, and its functioning. In addition, subject to the imposition of the conditions outlined throughout this report, I consider that the proposed development would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents, the Bidborough Conservation Area, nor the High Weald AONB and would accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in Development Plan Policies and the NPPF. In addition, support for the improvement of school facilities is heavily embedded within the NPPF, the Planning for Schools Development Policy Statement, and local planning policy, which should be afforded significant weight in balancing planning considerations.
83. Therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions, I am of the opinion that the proposed development is in accordance with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan Policies and the guidance contained in the NPPF and is sustainable development. I therefore conclude that the development is sustainable and recommend that permission to be granted, subject to appropriate planning conditions and Informatives.

**Recommendation**

84. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO conditions and Informative, including conditions covering:
1. The standard 3-year time limit;
  2. The development carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
  3. The development to be carried out using external materials and colour finishes, as specified within the planning application documents, unless otherwise agreed;
  4. Hours of working during construction to be restricted to between the hours of 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday and between the hours of 0900 and 1300 on Saturdays, with no operations on Sundays and Bank Holidays;
  5. No deliveries to be allowed to the construction site before 0900hrs or between 1415-1530 hrs during school term time;



## Item D1

### **Proposed 3G synthetic turf MUGA with associated fencing and path – Bidborough Primary School, Spring Lane, Bidborough – TW/22/3310**

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6. Prior to the commencement of the development a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme shall be submitted and approved, and thereafter implemented as approved;
7. The submission of a Verification Report pertaining to the surface water drainage scheme to be submitted and approved prior to first use of the development, and thereafter implemented as approved;
8. The hours of use of the MUGA shall be between 0800 and 1800 hrs Monday to Friday; Saturday and Sunday between the hours of 0800 and 1600 hrs. No use allowed on Bank Holidays;
9. The users of the MUGA shall be limited to those set out in the application. The facility shall not be let to or used by other users or hired to external commercial interests, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority (please see Informative below);
10. Prior to the commencement of the development, a revised Construction Environmental Management Plan, to include a Biodiversity Method Statement, shall be submitted and approved, and construction of the development shall thereafter be undertaken in accordance with the approved plan;
11. A Biodiversity Enhancement Plan to be submitted within 3 months of date of planning permission being granted;
12. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations in the Arboricultural Assessment;
13. No floodlighting or external lighting to be provided on this site.

#### **Informatives**

1. An Informative is recommended regarding any necessary highway approvals.
2. The applicant is reminded that permits will be required for any traffic management arrangements and to contact [streetworkswest@kent.gov.uk](mailto:streetworkswest@kent.gov.uk) to arrange these (please be aware that there would be a lead in time).
3. The letter drop that is proposed as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan and informing residents of the proposed works, should also include the church.
4. For the avoidance of doubt, the users of the development are limited to the School, parents, the Church and Bidbor'Out (the School's breakfast and after-school club).

Case officer – Lidia Cook
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Tel No.03000 413353
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Background documents - See section heading
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