

Proposed all weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 February 2010.

Application by the Governors of Swadelands School for the construction of an all weather sports pitch with floodlighting including ball stop fencing and acoustic noise barrier at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone (MA/09/2245)

Recommendation: Planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mrs. J. Whittle

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

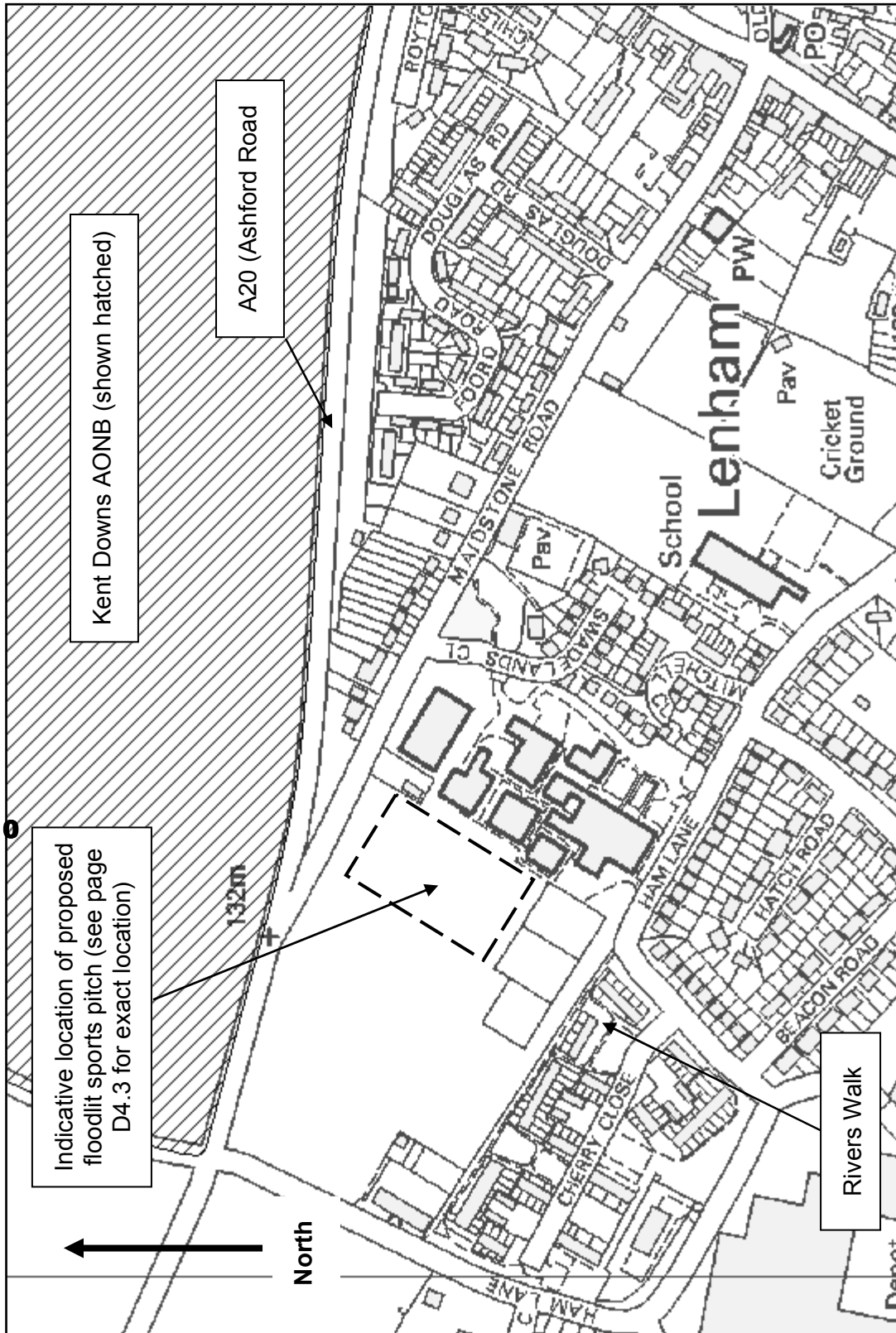
1. Swadelands school is designated a specialist Sports College and Training School. It is located on Ham Lane to the west of the village of Lenham, and comprises a mix of buildings of differing age, scale and mass. The existing campus buildings are located to the eastern side of the school grounds, with sports fields to the west, and an existing floodlit tennis court adjoining the southern boundary. The site is surrounded mainly on three sides by single and two storey residential dwellings, to the south and south-west by properties on Ham Lane/Cherry Close, to the east by properties on Swadelands Close and Mitchell Close and to the north by properties located along Maidstone Road. The school grounds are relatively flat across the entire site, with the land levels sloping up in a northerly direction beyond the main A20 [Ashford Road] across agricultural fields within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are no specific Local Plan designations relating to this site, although it is noted that the site lies within relative close proximity to the AONB. *A site location plan is attached on page D4.2*
2. The site for the proposed all weather sports pitch with floodlighting is located on a central part of the school site on existing undeveloped playing field land. It is located immediately adjacent to the western edge of the schools existing campus buildings, and adjacent to the northern boundary of existing floodlit tennis courts. *A plan showing the detailed location of the proposed all weather sports pitch can be found on page D4.3*

Proposal

3. The application seeks planning permission for the construction of a floodlit synthetic sports pitch covering a site area of approximately 0.69 hectares. The pitch would be surrounded by black weld mesh fencing of varying height – 4 metres generally around the pitch rising to 5 metres behind goals. As part of the proposals, the applicant has undertaken an acoustic review of the impact of the pitch on nearby noise-sensitive receptors. This review has led to the inclusion of a 2 metre high timber acoustic fencing being proposed along part of the northern boundary of the site as part of the proposals, for a duration of approximately 65 metres. The applicant considers that the inclusion of such attenuation measure would ensure that any potential noise concerns are satisfactorily ameliorated. The location of the proposed acoustic fence is shown on page D4.3.

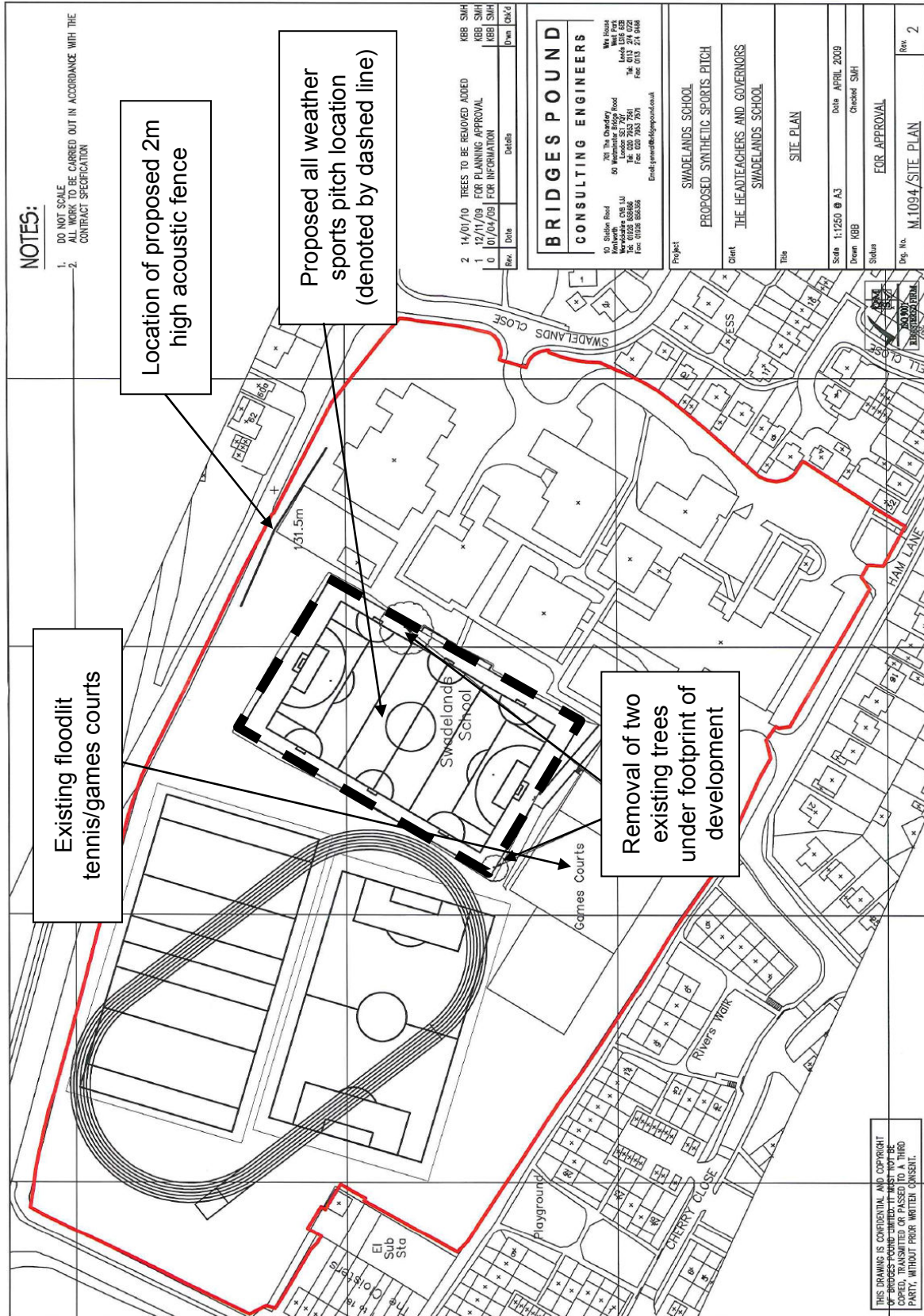
All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadlands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

Site Location Plan



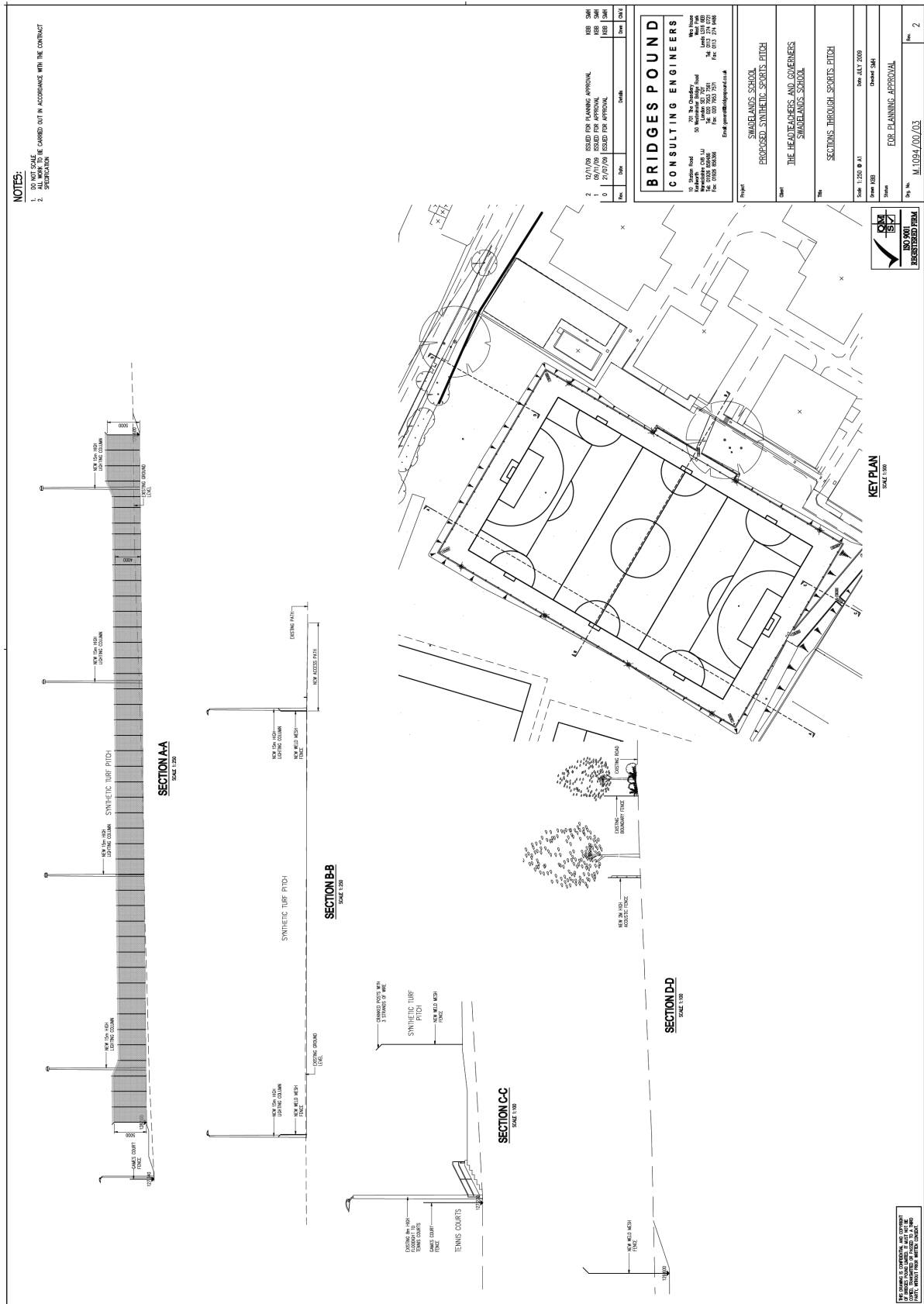
All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

Proposed all weather sports pitch



All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

Cross section through proposed all weather sports pitch



**All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School,
Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245**

4. The application sets out that the pitch location has been the result of a number of detailed design and site considerations, namely the need to locate the pitch near to existing school changing facilities and the need to protect existing school sports fields for future use. The applicant has advised that whilst a number of alternative pitch locations have been considered, they believe that the current proposals offer the best solution to the school and to the community. The chosen location allows the retention of the school's two existing football and rugby pitches and 400 metre running track (as shown on page D4.3). Several features have been shown for relocation as part of the proposals, such as the existing cricket wicket would be relocated between the new football and rugby pitches, whilst the existing long jump facility would be relocated to the end of the new synthetic sports pitch. I understand that pre-application discussions have taken place from an early stage with Sport England, together with representatives from the Football Association and English Cricket Board.
5. The application includes sports floodlighting to allow the facility to be used as part of the nationally promoted Extended Schools initiative. The applicant sets out that the lighting design and levels have been carefully considered to ensure that overspill lighting does not affect either the adjacent highways or nearby residential dwellings.
6. The floodlighting proposed would consist of eight 15 metre high lighting columns located along the eastern and western edges of the sports pitch. The floodlighting to be installed would be designed in such a way to allow lighting levels to be adjusted according to the sport being played. The requirements for football, 200 lux, is substantially below that for hockey 350 lux, therefore appropriate control measures would be used to ensure that the appropriate level of lighting would only be used for the specific sport being played (i.e. 200 lux for football and 350 lux for hockey). Essentially this means that lighting levels would often be lower than indicated within the application which sets out the highest (maximum) lighting levels. In order to ensure compliance with lighting levels set out within the application, the applicant advises that post completion testing of the lux lighting levels would be undertaken to ensure that any installed lighting meets the submitted design. That is standard practice for an installation of this nature.
7. The synthetic sports pitch would be located adjacent to existing floodlit tennis courts located on the southern boundary of the school site (see proposed plans on page D4.3). The applicant has considered that the existing floodlit tennis courts would effectively act as a buffer between the proposed new synthetic floodlit sports pitch and residential properties located along Ham Lane, Cherry Close and Rivers Walk. Furthermore, it is noted that the application sets out that lighting levels outside of the school boundary would fall within national guidelines for the nature of this location when considering the most light intensive sport use (hockey). Details of the lux lighting levels are included as indicated on page D4.4.
8. The application sets out details of proposed community use for the new facility, and has indicated that several local football, cricket and hockey clubs have expressed an interest in using the facility. The proposed hours of use of the facility suggested by the applicant have been dictated by the school timetable and the needs of the local community groups who have indicated a wish to use the new facility as follows:

Monday to Friday:	08:00 to 22:00 hours
Saturdays:	08:00 to 22:00 hours
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	09:00 to 20:00 hours

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

9. The applicant has indicated that the use of the new facility would be likely to attract typically between 30-40 people per match period, including participants, trainers and coaches, match officials and spectators. The application sets out that no additional staff would be employed at the school as a result of the development, and that parking for private vehicles and coaches will be made available within the school grounds for community use in association with the sports pitch out of normal school hours. Furthermore, the applicant considers that the current parking provision within the school grounds would be more than adequate to cover any need arising from these proposals.
10. The proposals would result in the loss of two trees (one Acer and one Horse Chestnut) located directly under the footprint of the new sports pitch. The locations of these two trees are shown on page D4.3. The applicant has confirmed that all existing site perimeter landscaping would not be affected by these proposals.

Planning Policy

11. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application:

(i) The adopted 2009 **South East Plan**:

- Policy SP3** The prime focus for development in the South East should be in urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services, and avoid unnecessary travel.
- Policy CC1** The principle objective of the Plan is to achieve and maintain sustainable development in the region.
- Policy CC4** The design and construction of all new development will be expected to adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques
- Policy CC6** Actions and decisions associated with the development and use of land will actively promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities.
- Policy T4** Local development documents should adopt restraint-based maximum levels of parking provision for non-residential development, reducing provision in locations with good public transport, and ensure the provision of sufficient cycle parking at new developments.
- Policy S6** The mixed use of community facilities should be encouraged by local authorities, public agencies and other providers, through local development documents and other measures in order to make effective use of resources.
- Policy BE1** Seeks new development to help improve the built environment with design solutions relevant to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

- Policy BE4** Local planning authorities should encourage schemes and proposals that help strengthen the viability of small market towns as hubs for community facilities and services (amongst other matters)
- Policy NRM1** Ground water will be maintained and enhanced through avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment.
- Policy NRM5** Local planning authorities shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.
- Policy NRM10** Measures to address and reduce noise pollution will be taken into consideration at the local level.
- Policy C3** High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Proposals for development within, or within close proximity to AONBs should be considered in that context.
- Policy TSR3** Local planning authorities should be proactive in maximising the benefits to local communities of any major/extended sports facilities.
- Policy S3** Local planning authorities should encourage mixed use approaches that include community facilities alongside 'formal' educational facilities
- Policy S5** Increased and sustainable participation in sport should be encouraged by local planning authorities.

(ii) The adopted 2000 Maidstone Local Plan (Saved Policies):

- Policy ENV6** Proposals will be required to incorporate the retention of existing trees and hedgerows which contribute to the landscape character of the area. A scheme of new planting of trees, shrubs and hedgerows will be required as appropriate using native species.
- Policy ENV33** Within the Kent Downs AONB the conservation of the natural beauty will be given priority over other considerations.
- Policy ENV49** In determining proposals for external lighting, the Borough Council will seek to ensure that the lighting is necessary to undertake the proposed use; to ensure that light spill is minimised; to ensure that any lighting scheme would not adversely impact on the amenities of adjoining or surrounding occupiers; to ensure that any lighting scheme is not visually detrimental to its immediate or wider landscape setting; and to ensure that any lighting would not distract or dazzle drivers or pedestrians using nearby highways.

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

Policy CF9 The Borough Council will seek to ensure that the providers of educational facilities make provision for the dual use of facilities for recreation and other purposes. Development proposals which incorporate dual use will be permitted except where the increased level or duration of activities is incompatible with local residential amenity.

Consultations

12. **Maidstone Borough Council:** has raised no objection to the application, subject to the imposition of conditions covering: the development be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of any permission and that full details of the acoustic fence to be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development.

Lenham Parish Council: has no objection to the proposal but wish to see the hours of operation limited to 22:00 hours as suggested.

Divisional Transportation Manager: has raised no objection to the application in respect of highway matters.

Environment Agency: has raised no objection to the application, subject to a condition requiring the submission of a scheme for the disposal of surface waters to be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development.

Sport England: wishes to support the application.

KCC Landscape Advisor: notes that the application proposes the removal of two trees (an Acer to the south west of the pitch and a Horse Chestnut to the east of the pitch) which offer significant landscape and visual benefit within the grounds as individual features. Such loss is therefore unfortunate.

The application shows the proposed pitch layout as well as the required grass pitch markings on the rest of the field – both indicate that there is little or no room elsewhere on the field to locate any replacement planting. The existing trees to the perimeter of the site soften the built element of the school and new replacement planting elsewhere within any ‘free space’ on the sports field would offer little visual screening.

Appreciate that it would not be practical to locate any new trees on the field, and so the existing tree and shrub belts around the site boundaries are to become even more important as landscape features and visual screens for the development and school site as a whole. Every care should be taken during any construction activities to safeguard boundary tree and shrub belts.

“Whilst it is noted that views of the proposed pitch from residential properties in Ham Lane and Rivers Walk would be minimised through the existing floodlit tennis courts, the proposed pitch would increase the visibility of constructed elements within the school site generally. We therefore recommend that the applicant looks to either increase the density of the existing boundary vegetation using under-storey and infill planting, or consider adding a secondary vegetative screen in the form of clumps of native trees or hedgerow planting further into the site, adjacent to the tennis court fence line”.

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

The application states that the floodlighting specification chosen would avoid unnecessary vertical or horizontal light spillage. Based on this information, and taking into account the existing vegetative screen and the proximity of the residential and industrial development areas beyond the school site which are lit during darkness, there would be no significant adverse impact on the neighbouring Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in terms of light pollution.

KCC Biodiversity Advisor: notes that from survey work undertaken by the applicant that the two trees to be removed as part of the proposals have been assessed as having limited bat roots potential. However, the trees within the existing hedgerow have potential to contain bat roots – future management of the site must be designed to ensure that the existing trees and not negatively impacted by any works carried out.

KCC Noise Advisor: notes that the 2 metre high noise barrier and the location specified is likely to provide sufficient attenuation to the potential noise from the use of the pitch

KCC Lighting Advisor: notes that the nearest properties to the proposal all weather pitch and its floodlighting are those located on Maidstone Road to the north (60m away) and bungalows on Rivers Walk to the south (80m away). On the northern boundary there are no properties directly behind the pitch as development ends opposite the school so the closest house is to the north east but there is screening of the school grounds by trees some 10m in height. Therefore although the proposed floodlight masts would be 15m high these should be screened from the view of properties in Maidstone Road.

“The school boundary to the south has a lower hedge and properties may therefore have a view of the floodlights but they also have existing street lighting along the pedestrian footway on the boundary and existing floodlighting of the games courts between them and the proposed pitch. This existing lighting will lower any impact of the new lighting.

The floodlights proposed are of the modern flat glass type where lanterns are mounted horizontally so that no light escapes above the horizontal and light spill outside the area to be lit is kept to a minimum. The light spill diagram contained within the application shows that there is no light spill anywhere near the properties and virtually nothing on Maidstone Road.

I would therefore advise that I have no concerns regarding the impact of the lighting on the surrounding area”.

KCC Archaeological Officer: considers that in view of known potential archaeological interest in the immediate vicinity a watching brief should be secured as part of any forthcoming consent.

Local Member

13. The local County Member, Mrs. J. Whittle, was notified of the application on the 3 December 2009.

**All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School,
Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245**

Publicity

14. The application was publicised by the posting of three site notices around the campus perimeter at the main boundaries with Ham Lane, Rivers Walk and Maidstone Road. In addition, 106 neighbouring residential properties were individually notified by letter of the application.

Representations

15. I have received two letters of representation in respect of this application. One letter has offered support to the proposal, suggesting that it is 'an excellent idea' subject to sufficient car parking being provided so that Ham Lane does not become an overflow car park. The other letter raises concerns for the following reasons:
- currently have lots of issues with pupils from Swadelands School both during the school hours but also after hours with clubs and youth activities;
 - the School is not able to police their pupils as it is, they constantly leave the school premises, hang out in the walk ways on the Cherry Close estate. During the evening activities the noise is awful some nights, the banging on the swings and frames and the screaming that goes on;
 - if this sports pitch goes ahead can only see things getting a lot worse, by needing a noise barrier obviously suggests a high amount of noise is expected and with floodlights this could be at any time of the day or evening. With the erection of a noise barrier it would also impact upon the landscape;
 - as well as the noise nuisance there will be additional problems with more parking and pick ups/dropping off;
 - if this facility when ahead then I would hope that it would be built at the top of the field by the A20 as far away as is possible to housing, to the side above the existing hard tennis court area.

Discussion

Introduction

16. The application seeks planning permission for the construction of an all weather sports pitch with floodlighting, to include ball stop fencing and an acoustic noise barrier, within the grounds of Swadelands School. The application is being reported to the Planning Applications Committee as a result of the residential objection received, as outlined in paragraph (15) above. In considering this proposal regard must be had to the Development Plan Policies outlined in paragraph (11). 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 the proposal needs to be considered in the context of the Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In my opinion, the key material planning considerations in this particular case relate to the impact of the proposed sports pitch on residential amenity, notably in terms of any adverse noise or light pollution issues; the impact of the development on the wider Kent Downs AONB, any traffic movement and/or generation issues together with the impact of the loss of two mature trees under the footprint of the proposed development.

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

Location of proposed pitch

17. I note that the location of the proposed sports pitch has been dictated by the need to ensure the continued provision of grass playing field to house the school's existing football and rugby pitches and 400 metre athletics running track. Once these factors are taken into consideration, it is noted that very little additional space remains available within the school grounds, other than the current proposed location, for the development of an all weather sports pitch. I understand that discussions took place with Sport England, national sports associations and local community sport groups at the pre-application stage regarding the size and location of the all weather pitch to determine an appropriate size for the level of use intended. The proposed floodlit pitch size is not dissimilar to that found on other secondary school sites across the county, many of which have been presented before this Committee to determine on their own merits.
18. Members will note that the proposed all weather sports pitch would be located some 60 metres from the nearest residential properties to the north on Maidstone Road, and some 80 metres from single storey bungalows to the south on Rivers Walk. In this instance, the nearest properties to the north benefit from existing tree and shrub screening along the northern boundary of the school site with Maidstone Road, and are located on the opposite side of the carriageway of Maidstone Road to the school grounds. To the south, the proposed pitch would be separated from the nearest residential properties by existing tree and shrub screening, together with existing floodlit tennis courts located close to the southern boundary of the school grounds.
19. In my opinion, given the lack of alternative sites for such development within the school grounds, I consider that the proposed location is broadly acceptable in principle, subject to discussions below relating to residential amenity, the impact on the AONB and landscaping issues.

Noise issues

20. Members will note that one of the main residential concerns expressed to date relates to the potential for the use of the proposed all weather sports pitch to generate additional noise nuisance at times when noise issues may not otherwise have been an issue (for example out of school hours after dark or prolonged periods during evenings and weekends). As part of the proposals, and in order to ameliorate potential noise concerns for the closest residential dwellings to the north of the development site, the application proposes the erection of a section of 2 metre high acoustic attenuation fencing. Discussions have taken place regarding the proposed use of the pitch, together with the mitigation measure proposed, with the County Council's Noise Consultant. To this effect, the County Council's Noise Consultant is satisfied that the mitigation measure proposed would satisfactorily address any potential noise pollution issues on surrounding residential amenity. Accordingly, they do not raise objection to the development on noise grounds. In terms of the visual impact of the proposed acoustic fence, I note that the structure would be located within the grounds of the school site with only partial views being experienced from outside of the site given the existing dense boundary vegetation. Furthermore, I propose that the external appearance and specification of the proposed 2m high acoustic fence be secured by planning condition in this instance.
21. That said, the extended hours of use of the school grounds for such community facility has the potential to generate additional noise impacts after 'traditional' school hours. It is noted however that the School currently runs a number of out of school hours

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

activities by way of after-school clubs, sports functions and adult education courses. In considering the significance of the impact of the extended hours of use of the school grounds in this instance, it is important to consider whether the hours of use of the pitch set out by the applicant are acceptable in this locality.

22. Members will note that the applicant has sought permission for the use of the floodlit all weather sports pitch between the following times: Monday-Friday 08:00 to 22:00 hour; Saturdays 08:00 to 22:00 hours; and Sundays/Bank Holidays between 09:00 to 20:00 hours. It is noted that these intended hours of use are broadly consistent with hours of use allowed for similar facilities across the county in residential locations. That said the hours need to be considered in the context of these proposals on their own merits. Whilst I consider that the proposed development would inevitably lead to a general increase in the amount of on-site activity beyond that of a 'traditional' school day, I consider that given the distance to nearby noise and light sensitive receptors, the mitigation measure proposed (i.e. the erection of an acoustic fence) and the existing boundary treatments to the perimeter of the site I do not consider the proposed hours of use to be inappropriate for this locality or for a Sports College school of this nature. Furthermore, I note that the Parish Council has raised no objection to the proposed hours of use, subject to at 22:00 curfew being applied to the development.
23. Accordingly, I would not raise an objection to the proposed development in terms of unacceptable noise impacts on surrounding residential amenity, or to the proposed hours of use for the floodlit sports pitch as set out in the application as I consider that the proposals broadly accord with the general policy principles contained within South East Plan Policy NRM10. I therefore recommend that the hours of use applied for be secured by way of a planning condition on any future planning consent.

Light spill issues

24. The floodlighting element proposed by this application comprises of modern standard flat glass type lanterns which direct light to the area intended to be illuminated, and keep unnecessary light spill either horizontally or vertically to a minimum. The application includes proposed maximum lux lighting levels which indicate that levels of light spill will fall away generally within 30 to 40 metres from the pitch boundary. In effect this would result that a maximum of 1 lux being experienced at the northern boundary of the site adjacent to Maidstone Road, which would still be some 20 metres from the nearest residential boundary. To the south, lux levels would fall away such that a light level of 1 lux would end some 45 metres from the nearest residential boundary. It is important however to bear in mind that the lighting levels included within the application are the maximum lighting levels to be used when the most light-intensive sport is to be played on the pitch (hockey) and therefore in a number of circumstances light spill would be significantly less than the maximum levels discussed here. Furthermore, I note that the proposals have been independently assessed by the County Council's Lighting Consultant who has concluded that he has no concerns regarding the impact of the floodlighting on the surrounding area
25. Local Plan Policy ENV49 states that in determining proposals for external lighting, permission will only be granted where the following five criteria are met: (a) the level of lighting is necessary to undertake the proposed use; (b) any unnecessary light spill is minimised; (c) no adverse impact is experienced on the amenities of adjoining or surrounding occupiers as a result of the lighting scheme; (d) that the lighting is not visually detrimental to its immediate or wider landscape setting; and (e) the lighting would not distract or dazzle drivers or pedestrians using nearby highways. In my opinion, in this particular case I consider that each of the policy tests have been met

All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School, Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245

satisfactorily and therefore a policy objection on these grounds could not be sustained. Furthermore, I note the ability of the lighting system to alter lighting levels according to the requirements for the specific sport being played (i.e. 200 lux for football and 350 lux for hockey).

Impact on Kent Downs AONB

26. It is noted that the proposed sports pitch is located relatively close to the boundary of the Kent Downs AONB. The proposed pitch would be located some 55 metres from the actual boundary of the AONB, with this distance separated by the main A20 [Ashford Road], Maidstone Road and boundary vegetation offering screening between the school playing fields and the sloping landscape northwards towards the Kent Downs AONB. The overriding policy presumption for the AONB is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Therefore the proposal needs to be considered in the context of this policy to ensure that the development does accords with overriding policy presumptions.
27. Whilst the impact of the proposed floodlighting has the potential to be identified during night-time periods from within the AONB, I am satisfied that given the schools built-up characteristics, and that of industrial development in the immediate locality, the impact of these proposals would be relatively minimal on the wider AONB. I note that there are a number of existing floodlit developments within the Lenham area generally, and this specific proposal in my opinion is unlikely to cause a significant or overriding impact to the wider Kent Downs AONB sufficient to warrant an objection on policy grounds. Furthermore, I note that the County Council's Landscape Advisor has shared my view that there would be no significant adverse impact on the neighbouring Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in terms of light pollution as a result of these proposals. The specific lighting specification chosen comprises of modern flat glass type lighting units where lanterns are mounted horizontally so that no light escapes upwards, therefore ensuring that light spill outside the area intended to be illuminated is kept to a minimum.
28. On this basis, I consider that the proposed development broadly meets with the policy requirements of South East Plan Policy C3 and Local Plan Policy ENV33. I would therefore not raise an objection to the proposed development in terms of any adverse impact on the wider Kent Downs AONB.

Highway issues

29. Members will note that concerns have been expressed regarding the ability for the proposed development to generate additional traffic movements to/from the site and for these additional movements to cause an adverse impact on surrounding residential amenity. Whilst I accept that additional movements would inevitably occur as a result of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the overall impact of this issue would not be unacceptable or overbearing in residential amenity terms. Furthermore, I am satisfied that given the main times when the wider community/sports groups would use the all weather pitch would generally be outside the typical school day, private vehicles and/or coaches with team members would be able to park within the main school grounds avoiding any inappropriate or unacceptable on-street parking in the locality. I note the professional views received from the Divisional Transportation Manager, in which they raise no objection to the proposals in respect of highway matters.
30. Accordingly, I consider the proposed development to be acceptable in planning terms from a highway perspective and would seek to ensure that vehicle and coach parking is

**All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School,
Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245**

made available within the school grounds during out of school hours when the all weather sports pitch is in use.

Landscaping issues

31. The proposed development involves the removal of two mature trees, one Alder and one Horse Chestnut, from under the footprint of the all weather sports pitch. Whilst this is unfortunate given that both trees individually and collectively add landscape value to the site in general, their removal has to be accepted if the provision of an all weather sports pitch at the site is to be established for the reasons discussed in paragraphs (17) to (19) above relating to the lack of an alternative location for such development. Regrettably, I therefore accept their loss as part of these proposals.
32. In my opinion the boundary vegetation surrounding the school site, in terms of tree and shrub planting, plays a significant role in terms of screening the school's built development from immediately outside of the site and at a wider scale with views from the Kent Downs AONB. The application sets out that no boundary screening would be lost or impacted upon as a result of the proposals. From a planning perspective I would wish to ensure that any necessary precautionary measures are put in place to protect existing trees and hedgerows surrounding the school site where it is intended that works would be carried out within close proximity to root protection areas. I therefore propose that such measures be secured by way of planning condition on any future planning consent.
33. Members will note that the County Council's Landscape Consultant has advised that the applicant should look at providing additional under-storey tree and/or shrub planting along the southern boundary of the site in order to strengthen the section of boundary immediately affected by the development proposals. I consider that such measure is reasonable and proportionate in respect to the nature of the proposals, and given the loss of two mature trees under the footprint of the development. Such approach would accord with the overall policy objectives of Policy ENV6 of the Local Plan. I therefore recommend that a planning condition be imposed on any future planning consent requiring the applicant to submit and obtain approval for a landscaping scheme to address this matter.

Other issues

34. Members will note that concerns have been raised (as outlined in paragraph 15 above) relating to existing issues with pupils of Swadelands School collecting in groups outside of the site during school hours and out of hours. These issues relate to school management issues which fall outside the scope of direct control by the County Planning Authority. In order to make the School aware of these issues, the concerns have been passed through the applicant's agent directly to the School.

Conclusion

35. Having regard to the Development Plan Policies, in addition to the considerations raised by local residents in this case, I consider that the proposed floodlit sports pitch is in general conformity with the development plan. I am satisfied that issues relating to noise and light pollution have been satisfactorily addressed with the inclusion of a noise attenuation fence and an appropriate lighting scheme such that the amenities of adjoining or surrounding occupiers would not be significantly affected as a result of the proposals. I also consider for the reasons stated above that there would be no

**All weather sports pitch with floodlighting at Swadelands School,
Ham Lane, Lenham, Maidstone – MA/09/2245**

significant wider impact on the Kent Downs AONB as a result of the floodlit sports pitch proposals.

36. Furthermore, I note that the general presumption of Development Plan Policy is to support mixed use of community facilities to include sport and recreational facilities alongside formal education facilities except where an increased level or duration of activities is incompatible with local residential amenity (South East Plan Policies S3 and S6 together with Local Plan Policy CF9). In this instance I am satisfied that the proposals would not be incompatible with local residential amenity, subject to appropriate controls being imposed to restrict the hours of use of the pitch as set out by the applicant. I also note that the South East Plan seeks to encourage local authorities to foster increased and sustainable participation in sport and recreational activities wherever possible (South East Plan Policy S5). I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions as set out in paragraph (37) below.

Recommendation

37. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO conditions, including conditions to cover the following aspects:

- the standard time limit;
- the development to be carried out in accordance with the permitted details;
- all trees and hedges within the site (other than the two shown for removal under the development footprint) shall be afforded necessary protection and precautionary measures;
- details of surface water drainage scheme to be submitted to and approved by County Planning Authority prior to commencement of development;
- details of specification and external appearance of 2m high acoustic fence to be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority prior to commencement of development;
- archaeological watching brief be implemented;
- post completion lighting test report to be submitted to and agreed by County Planning Authority before pitch being brought into first operation;
- acoustic fence be installed in accordance with the approved specification prior to pitch being brought into first operation;
- landscaping scheme be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority prior to commencement of development to address under-storey planting along the southern boundary of the site.
- hours of use of the pitch be limited to the following hours:

Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 22:00 hours
Saturdays: 08:00 to 22:00 hours
Sundays and Bank Holidays: 09:00 to 20:00 hours

Case officer – Julian Moat	01622 696978
----------------------------	--------------

Background documents - See section heading
--