

## DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Church

App Ref: 231860/FUL

Address: Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road, Reading, RG2 7ED

Proposals: Retrospective application for replacement of and extension to existing Astro Turf pitch and associated tree mitigation measures.

Case Officer: Mr Anthony Scholes

Date received (valid from): 9 January 2024      Target Decision date: 5 March 2024

### 1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Site visit date: 09/02/2024

Site visit photos:



The application site is a large open area with multiple sporting fields associated with Leighton Park School. The main school ground are to the east of the playing fields, with University of Reading further beyond that. To the west of the fields is Shinfield Road, with residential uses opposite. The area between the astro turf field is heavily vegetated, and forms a tree grouping TPO. There are various other TPO's over the site, and near the proposal. The wider Leighton Park School contains a listed building (list entry no. 1113577).

This listed building is a considerable distance from the proposal, however is likely within the setting of the listed building, with the area of the pitch forming the original grounds.

## **2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The applicant is seeking retrospective planning permission for the replacement of the Astro Turf pitch at Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road. In addition to replacement of the surface, the applicant has installed additional storage areas for sports equipment (goals etc.) within a recessed turfed and fenced area, and also increased the height of enclosure by 2m to a total of 5m at the main goal ends by way of netting above the existing fence. The proposal also includes an additional spectators area to the east of the astro turf pitch.

Plans considered

Location Plan

Dwg No. 2688/GA/01 - Proposed synthetic sports pitch general arrangement, dated 01/08/23

Dwg No. 15776/7 - Existing Site Plan, dated January 2012

Received 9 January 2024

## **3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

890792 (89-01438-FUL) - Construction of all weather pitch with fencing on existing playing fields.

890504 - Erection of eight 15m high floodlighting columns to illuminate all weather sports pitch.

992211 - Variation of Condition 2 (hours in which floodlights can be turned on) of planning application 98/0372/FD/CM to allow the floodlights to be turned on between 15.00 and 21.00.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

A site notice was erected on the site boundary to Shinfield Road.

No letters of representation have been received.

*Internal consultations*

*Ecology*

No objections.

*Natural Environment*

*"With reference to my memo of 6/3/24 and the attached completion report, I can confirm that the tree mitigation measures are acceptable and appear to have been completed in accordance with the details provided.*

*As this is retrospective, I assume there is no point in attaching a condition requiring development in accordance with the 'Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan for Development Site' document from Future Tree. However, it would be appropriate to attach a condition requiring the mitigation measures to be retained, particularly the woodchip, and for the trees to be monitored, as recommended, for 5 years. In addition, it*

*would be prudent to add Informative based on I15 regarding TPOs (but amended appropriately for this situation)."*

No objections subject to conditions.

*Transport*

No Comments.

## **5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

### **National Policy and Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

### **Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)**

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

EN7: LOCAL GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### **Equality Act 2010:**

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## **APPRAISAL**

### *Principle of Development*

The proposed development is for the refurbishment and improvement of an existing astro turf pitch which had reached end of functional life. Policy OU1 states that *"Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site ..."*. The resurfacing, including releveling to

address internal drainage issues were necessary to retain functionality of the astro turf pitch. As such, the principle of the improved existing community facility is acceptable.

### *Design and Appearance*

Policy CC7 requires all development to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Policies EN1 and EN6 require special attention to be given to the significant of listed buildings. The subject site is set well back from Shinfield Road, and screened heavily by established vegetation, subject of a TPO grouping. The proposal includes minor amendments to the layout of the pitch, with an eastern expansion of three protrusions to facilitate additional storage and spectating areas. In addition, the proposal includes a 2m high netting attached to the top of the fence behind the goal ends to stop balls making their way past the fence. The proposal also includes an additional footpath to the north-western area to access the pitch. Due to the minor nature of these works, and distance to the highway, and listed building it is considered that these additions are acceptable and accord with Policy CC7, EN1, and EN6.

### *Natural Environment*

The proposed development is retrospective, and was brought forward as a result of Natural Environment officer comments and concerns for tree health in the vicinity. Policy EN14 states, *“Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading’s vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced.”* In this instance, though the works don’t necessarily impact the root areas of the trees, construction activities necessitated tree protection measures to be considered and implemented. As the works have all but been completed, natural environment officers sought confirmation from the applicants consultant to ensure works were completed in accordance with the method statement submitted. This has been received, and natural environment officers are satisfied that this has been satisfactorily implemented, subject to maintenance in accordance with the scheme for the following 5 years. As such a condition is recommended to be attached to the approval.

### **Conclusion**

The retrospective permission is recommended for approval based on limited impacts on the appearance of the area, and improvement to the sports offering at the school. Impacts on vegetation have been mitigated satisfactorily.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve.