

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

19 JUNE 2019

APPLICATION NO.

19/P0824

DATE VALID

14/02/2019

Address/Site: Old Rutlishians Association Sports Ground
Poplar Road, Merton Park

Ward: Merton Park

Proposal: Installation of new cricket nets to replace existing, erection of new storage shed & erection of mesh-wire fencing along western and eastern boundaries to height of 1.8m.

Drawing No.'s: Site location plan, block plan, SK003, Elevations (Rev B) Amended 04.04.2019, NSORCC002 & A15-142/OLDR171213 & Fence Details 04.04.2019.

Contact Officer: Tony Smith (020 8545 3144)

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to conditions.

CHECKLIST INFORMATION

- S106: No
- Is a screening opinion required: No
- Is an Environmental Statement required: No
- Has an Environmental Statement been submitted: No
- Press notice: Yes
- Site notice: Yes
- Design Review Panel consulted: No
- Number of neighbours consulted: 33
- External consultations: 1
- Conservation area: No
- Listed building: No
- Archaeological priority zone: No
- Tree protection orders: No
- Controlled Parking Zone: Yes, Zone MP1
- Flood Zone: 1
- Designated Open Space: Yes – 'The Old Rutlishians Sports Club'
- Metropolitan Open Land: No

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is being brought to the Planning Applications Committee for determination due to the number of objections received.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site comprises the Old Rutlishians Association Sports Ground located on the eastern side of Poplar Road and to the north of the junction with Circle Gardens in Merton Park. The playing fields are used for rugby and cricket training and matches during their respective seasons and the grounds include a pavilion to the north-west of the site, with a set of 3 lane cricket nets to the north-east corner. Parking spaces are provided along the full length of the western side facing Poplar Road. The surrounding area is made up of residential streets and Merton Park Primary School is located approximately 170m to the north-west. The site is approximately 25,300 sq.m in size
- 2.2 The site has a public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of 3 which is considered moderate (with 0 being the lowest and 6b being the highest).

3. CURRENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for the removal of the existing 3 lane cricket nets and the installation of new 4 lane nets in the north-eastern corner of the site, with the erection of a new storage shed and installation of mesh wire fencing along the western and eastern boundaries.
- 3.2 The proposed nets are situated in the north-eastern corner of the site, being located 10m from the northern boundary with the rear gardens of nos. 34 & 36 Erridge Road and maintaining a 4m separation from the eastern boundary with the cul-de-sac end of Charnwood Avenue. The nets have been constructed parallel to the eastern boundary and the rugby field in order to leave a 5m run-off distance as recommended by the RFU & World Rugby. The proposed nets utilise a typical metal cage with fully enclosed black mesh netting and artificial grass pitches to allow for all weather practise. Approximately 2m high white tarpaulin sheets have been installed to the side netting of the batting areas, towards the centre of the enclosures, in order to provide screening from adjacent nets and other external distractions.
- 3.3 The proposed nets have the following dimensions:
- 72m length
 - 7.9m width
 - 4m height
- 3.4 It should be noted that this proposal follows previously approved planning permission ref. 18/P1480, with the only difference to the cricket nets being a further separation from the northern boundary by 6.2m and from the eastern boundary by approx. 0.2m.
- 3.5 It is also proposed to erect a timber storage shed to the south-east of the nets. The shed would be situated 1m from the eastern boundary hedge (and proposed netting). The shed would have mono-pitched roof, with the lower eaves facing the eastern boundary.

3.6 The storage shed would have the following dimensions:

- 5m length
- 4m width
- 2.2m eaves height
- 2.75m maximum height

3.7 It should be noted that the application has been amended upon submission to include the installation of mesh fencing to the western and eastern boundaries of the site. The proposed fencing would require 40x60mm posts spaced approximately 2.5m apart, and would use a moss green coloured wire mesh to a height of 1.8m.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 M/M5442 - USE OF MAIN HALL OF PAVILION FOR KINDERGARTEN CLASS: Granted.

4.2 M/M5879 - ENTRANCE GATES: Granted.

4.3 M/M6661 - EXTENSION TO CLUBHOUSE: Granted.

4.4 M/M8538 - ERECTION OF TRANSFORMER CHAMBER: Granted.

4.5 M/M8826 - EXTENSION TO AIR RAID SHELTER AND USE AS IMPLEMENT STORE: Granted.

4.6 M/M9105 - OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT: Refused.

4.7 MER66/72 - ERECTION OF NEW SQUASH COURT BUILDING: Granted.

4.8 MER754/82 - ERECTION OF A SINGLE STOREY BUILDING: Granted.

4.9 95/P0128 - DISPLAY OF NON-ILLUMINATED SIGN: Granted.

4.10 18/P1480 - REPLACEMENT OF CRICKET NETS: Granted.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Public consultation was undertaken by way of site notice, a press notice in the local Newspaper and letters sent to 34 neighbouring properties initially. In addition to this, a second round of consultation was undertaken given the aforementioned amendments to the scheme to include mesh fencing along the western and eastern boundaries. The outcome of the combined consultation periods are summarised as follows:

5.2 Representations were received from 13 neighbouring properties who raised the following points:

- Structure has already been erected before approval
- Some neighbours didn't receive a notice

- Loss of view from Charnwood Avenue
- Visual intrusion and dominating
- Permanent structure and therefore visible year round
- White tarpaulin blinkers unsightly and do not blend in with surroundings
- No objection to netting material, but objection to any opaque materials
- Site too close to Charnwood Avenue
- Concerns over practise times and previous unsocial language from users
- Increased activity and noise towards Charnwood Avenue
- The nets appear safer as they reduce stray cricket balls entering rear gardens
- Objection to fencing as unnecessary and out of keeping with area
- Request for hedge to be grown to height of fence
- No mention of how the fence will be secured to ground
- Mix of mesh, hedge, spikes and cricket netting is visually unacceptable
- Request for existing netting to remain in addition to new fence

5.3 Sport England were also consulted as the operations would affect a playing field. Their representation is summarised as follows:

- Consultation with Sport England is a statutory requirement
- It is proposed to provide replacement cricket nets at this club, which are required to provide more modern facilities for training and also provide facilities that reduce the number of stray balls falling in the gardens of neighbouring facilities
- The cricket ground is home to a thriving community club and the facilities will help support the sporting activities of both young and old members
- The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use
- Therefore Sport England raises no objection to the application and supports the proposals.

6. POLICY CONTEXT

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
12. Achieving well-designed places

6.2 London Plan (2016)

Relevant policies include:

3.19 Sports Facilities

7.4 Local Character

6.3 Merton Local Development Framework Core Strategy – 2011 (Core Strategy)

Relevant policies include:

CS 13 Open Space, Nature Conservation, Leisure & Culture

CS 14 Design

6.4 Merton Sites and Policies Plan – 2014 (SPP)

Relevant policies include:

Merton Sites and Policies Plan July 2014 policies

DM D2 Design considerations in all developments

DM O1 Open space

DM O2 Nature conservation, trees, hedges and landscape features

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Material Considerations

The key issues in the assessment of this planning application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on open space, nature conservation and sporting facilities.
- Design and impact upon the character and appearance of the area
- Impact upon neighbouring amenity
- Response to objections

Principle of development

7.2 The principle of development (for the cricket nets) has already been established by way of the approved planning permission ref. 18/P1480. Therefore the only elements to be considered within this application are the impacts of the relocation of the nets, and the impacts of the storage outbuilding and fencing to eastern and western boundaries.

7.3 The site is currently in use as a sports ground and the proposals seek to improve the capacity and quality of its sporting facilities without impeding the use of the site, which is also used as a rugby pitch in the winter seasons.

7.4 Given the above, it is considered the proposal is acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with the relevant policies of the London Plan, Merton Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Merton Sites and Policies Plan, as detailed in the relevant sections below.

Impact on open space, nature conservation and sporting facilities

7.5 Core strategy policy CS13 and SPP Policies DM01 & DM02 seek to protect open spaces and improve leisure and sport facilities within the borough, whilst protecting biodiversity.

7.6 The new cricket cage and artificial surface would serve to improve on the existing dilapidated nets. The existing nets are orientated as such that batsmen face the setting sun causing blinding issues, balls escape into neighbouring gardens and the 3 lanes cannot provide for the number of members currently. The proposed pitches would be permanent, with a synthetic imitation grass wicket surface laid into the ground, providing a seamless transition from the surrounding field. The cage and netting would be fully enclosed, preventing balls escaping into neighbouring gardens and the pitches would now be orientated north-south to prevent any blinding issues in the evening. The nets would be positioned 5m away from the rugby pitch as recommended by the RFU and World Rugby in order to allow sufficient run-off. Sport England were consulted as a Statutory Consultee, who supported the proposal.

7.6 Regarding biodiversity and nature conservation, this section of the site is made up of grass with no trees or bushes to be removed. It is therefore not considered the proposal would raise concerns in this respect.

7.7 Given the above, it is therefore considered the proposal would be in accordance with Core strategy policy CS13 and SPP Policies DM01 & DM02.

Design and impact upon the character and appearance of the area

7.8 Core strategy policy CS14 and SPP Policy DMD2 require well designed proposals that will respect the appearance, materials, scale, bulk, proportions and character of its surroundings.

7.9 Objections have been raised regarding the visual impact of the cricket nets on the character and appearance of the area, particularly when viewed from Charnwood Avenue. Objections mainly relate to the white tarpaulin screenings to the side of the batting areas which have the purpose of reducing distractions, and therefore by design, are necessary to be opaque.

7.10 The nets are sited within a sports ground, and therefore the context to which they must be assessed is that of sporting facilities. Whilst the nets would be visible from the streetscene of Charnwood Avenue, it is not considered that they would be out of keeping with the character of the sports ground, and would therefore accord with the aforementioned policies.

7.11 In regards to the storage shed, it is considered the use of timber and the modest scale of development would not give rise to a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the sports ground or neighbouring streetscene.

7.12 Regarding the erection of 1.8m high mesh wire fencing, the applicant has made efforts to reduce its visual impact, by the choice of Green wiring. It is considered the erection of open fencing at this height and would not be incongruous with typical boundary treatments of sporting grounds and would have limited impact on the character and appearance of its surrounding area.

Impact upon neighbouring amenity

7.13 London Plan policy 7.4 and 7.6, SPP policy DMD2 and Core Strategy Policy CS14 require that proposals do not have a negative impact on neighbour amenity in terms of loss of light, outlook, privacy, overshadowing or noise.

7.14 The nets would be relatively large, being 4m in height and running 8m along the northern boundary and 72m along the eastern boundary. The nets would maintain a 10m and 4m separation distance from these respective boundaries, with a further 2.5m separation to Charnwood Avenue to the east, due to the pedestrian accessway. It is considered that these separation distances, in conjunction with the materials used (mostly metal poles, material netting and some opaque tarpaulin), would not give rise to an undue harmful impact to neighbouring amenity in terms of visual intrusion, loss of light, outlook, shadowing or privacy.

- 7.15 Regarding increased noise generation from the proposal, it is considered that the existing use and nature of the site, the similar positioning of the nets and the modest increase in lanes from 3 to 4, would not generate an unexpected, materially harmful impact to neighbouring amenity in terms of noise pollution.

Responses to objections

- 7.16 The majority of the issues raised by objectors are addressed in the body of the report but in addition, the following response is provided:
- Whilst the structure may be in place already, this would not prejudice the determination of the planning application.
 - Notices were sent to neighbouring occupiers who were deemed to be affected by the proposal, and a notice was posted outside the site and within the local newspaper.
 - Unsocial language of users of the facilities is not a material planning consideration.
 - Officers consider the visual impact of the proposal is acceptable without the need for additional screening, including the growth of the existing hedge.
 - The fixing of the fence has been detailed within the application documents.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposal would serve to improve on existing sporting facilities on open space without harming the character of the site and surrounding area or materially impacting neighbouring residential amenity. It is therefore recommended to grant permission subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

- 1) Standard condition [Commencement of development]: The development, to which this permission relates, shall be commenced not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2) Standard condition [Approved plans]: The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: [Refer to the schedule on page 1 of this report].

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3) Amended standard condition [Materials]: The facing materials to be used for the development hereby permitted shall be those specified in the approved drawings and documents unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance of the development and to comply with the following Development Plan policies for Merton: policy 7.6 of the London Plan 2016, policy CS14 of Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and policies DM D2 and D3 of Merton's Sites and Policies Plan 2014.

Informatives:

1) INFORMATIVE

In accordance with paragraphs 38 and 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018, The London Borough of Merton takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. The London Borough of Merton works with applicants or agents in a positive and proactive manner by suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome; and updating applicants or agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application. In this instance, the Planning Committee considered the application where the applicant or agent had the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the application.

[Click here](#) for full plans and documents related to this application.

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