

**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
**DEPARTMENT:** Planning Service  
**DIRECTOR OF PLANNING:** Peter Baguley

**APPLICATION REF:** N/2020/0381

**LOCATION:** Wootton Park School, Wootton Hall Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Relocation of Multi-Use-Games-Area 5m to the south of its approved position (retrospective)

**WARD:** East Hunsbury Ward

**APPLICANT:** Department for Education  
**AGENT:** Mr Alex Yearsley

**REFERRED BY:** Councillor P Larratt  
**REASON:** Sporting implication concerns

**DEPARTURE:** No

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#### **APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:**

#### **1 RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The proposed development, as part of a balanced assessment, is considered acceptable subject to conditions. Therefore, no objections are raised with regards to the National Planning Policy Framework; Policies S1, S10, C2, RC2, E6, BN1, BN2, BN5, and BN9 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Saved Policy E9, and E20 of the Northampton Local Plan.

#### **2 THE PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the relocation of the single court Multi-Use-Games-Area (MUGA) permitted under application N/2018/0187 to the south of its approved position by 5 metres.
- 2.2 The application supporting submission details that the MUGA has been re-sited due to the discovery of an existing soakaway that was not shown on existing utilities plans; the soakaway was found to be extremely deep (6-7 metres) with multiple unknown drainage runs connecting into it.

#### **3 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 3.1 The application site is in East Hunsbury and forms part of the new Wootton Hall School site, which was permitted by the Planning Committee under application N/2018/0187 and is nearing completion. The new school occupies a prominent gateway location that fronts directly onto Mereway (A5076), close to the Queen Eleanor Roundabout and the A45. The site can be split into two distinct elements set to the north and south sides of the road at Wootton Hall Park. The northern part of the site is where the new school building is located. The southern part of the site comprises the northern half of Wootton Hall Park and includes a playing field, two Multi-Use-Games-Areas (MUGAs), pavilion building, and car parking which will serve the new school.
- 3.2 The southern half of Wootton Hall Park falls outside the application site and includes a cricket pitch and temporary buildings that presently house Wootton Park School.
- 3.3 Wootton Hall Park is neighboured by housing to the east.

## **4 PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 N/2020/0156: Non Material Amendment to Planning Permission N/2018/0187 for the provision of external rainwater pipework and minor adjustment of the position of some external windows and doors. Permitted.
- 4.2 N/2019/0156: Erection of a temporary modular unit and associated external alterations for educational use (Use Class D1) for a temporary period of 18 months (September 2019 - March 2021). Permitted.
- 4.3 N/2019/0154: Retrospective temporary application for the retention of the existing modular unit and associated external alterations for educational use (Use Class D1) for a temporary period of 18 months (September 2019 - March 2021). Permitted.
- 4.4 N/2018/0187: Demolish existing buildings to enable the development of a three storey building to accommodate a 2 Form Entry Primary School, 4 Form Entry Secondary School and Sixth Form (Use Class D1) including associated works, car parking, boundary treatment and the refurbishment of the existing Sports Pavilion and provision of school playing fields. Permitted.
- 4.5 N/2016/0545 / 16/00015/CCDFUL: Erection of temporary modular units and associated alterations for education use for a temporary period of three years. Permitted by NCC.
- 4.6 89/1058: Erection of sports and social pavilion. Permitted.
- 4.7 87/1078: Sports hall, club facilities and outdoor pitches with associated social activities. Permitted.

## **5 PLANNING POLICY**

### **5.1 Statutory Duty**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014), and Northampton Local Plan (1997) saved policies.

### **5.2 National Policies**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following sections are of particular relevance to this application:

Paragraph 11 – Sustainable Development  
Section 8 – Healthy and Safe Communities  
Section 9 – Sustainable Transport  
Section 12 – Well-Designed Places  
Section 15 – Natural Environment

### 5.3 **West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)**

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

S1 – The Distribution of Development  
S10 – Sustainable Development Principles  
C2 – New Developments (Travel and Highway Networks)  
RC2 – Community Needs  
E6 – Education, Skills and Training  
BN1 – Green infrastructure  
BN2 – Biodiversity  
BN5 – Historic Environment and Landscape  
BN9 – Planning for Pollution Control

### 5.4 **Northampton Local Plan 1997 (Saved Policies)**

Due to the age of the plan, the amount of weight that can be attributed to the aims and objectives of this document are diminished, however, the following policies are material to this application:

E9 – Locally Important landscape Areas  
E20 – New Development (Design)

### 5.5 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004  
Northamptonshire County Parking Standards 2016  
Northampton Parking Standards 2019

## 6 **CONSULTATIONS / REPRESENTATIONS**

Comments received are summarised as follows:

### 6.1 **Councillor P Larratt:** As the Ward Councillor, wish to strongly object to this application and call the application in for determination by the Planning Committee due to its sporting implications.

The proposal represents a further incursion onto the cricket pitch at Wootton Hall Park, a community sports facility that have called for to be retained and protected through out the development off the school and into the future.

There is a lack of quality cricket pitches in Northampton. This was one of the best pitches in the town and was used by various communities. The school claims to be part of the community, but all it has done is to alienate the community and deprive it of a quality sports facility.

The objective here is to make the cricket pitch unusable leaving the need to find an alternative use for the land. As it will not be feasible as a cricket pitch, have no doubt whatsoever that there will be an application to develop the site for housing or care home. This land is afforded the same status under the saved policies in the Local Plan as Abington Park, Delapre Park, and the Racecourse; question how long before the land is built on by West Northants Council if this policy is ignored.

The integrity of the quality cricket pitch at Wootton Hall Park should be retained for the benefits of the wider community and the application should be refused.

- 6.2 **Arboricultural Officer (NBC):** The changes to the layout will have no material impact on tree cover.
- 6.3 **Public Protection (NBC):** No objections.
- 6.4 **Northamptonshire Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor:** No objections.
- 6.5 **Sport England:** The proposed development results in a minor encroachment onto the playing field. However, having considered the nature of the playing field and its ability to accommodate a range of pitches, it is not considered that the development would reduce the sporting capability of the site. Consequently, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application.
- 6.6 **One neighbour objection letter** has been received, which includes the following points:
- The proposal would result in the loss of more green space that was a park.
  - The car parking on the site for the school is unnecessary and the land should instead have been used for the Multi-Use Games Area.
  - Proposal would prevent the return of a full cricket pitch to the south of the site.
  - Unclear why the school cannot share sports fields with the community.
  - Wootton Hall Park has the same protected status as other parks across the Borough.
  - Only limited neighbour notification has taken place for this application.

## 7 APPRAISAL

- 7.1 Policy E6 of the Joint Core Strategy and the guidance in the NPPF both support the principle of education facilities.
- 7.2 Policy RC2 of the Joint Core Strategy and the guidance in Paragraph 97 of the NPPF seek to resist the unjustified loss of open space and land used for sports purposes. In this instance, the proposed MUGA has been relocated 5 metres to the south into land previously permitted for playing pitches for Wootton Park School, with open boundaries onto the existing cricket pitch located to the southern half of Wootton Hall Park. The applicant has submitted several plans to demonstrate that the proposal does not result in the loss of outdoor sports pitches, with for example, sufficient available land for the outfield of the existing artificial cricket and also for enlarged boundaries should a 5-pitch grass cricket pitch be reinstated in the future. Furthermore, Sport England, the statutory consultee for sport related matters, has assessed the application and advise that the minor encroachment into the playing field does not reduce the sporting capacity of the site. In addition, the southern half of Wootton Hall Park would remain available as an area of open space that could be used by the community for informal recreational use. It is noted that the MUGA was previously the subject of a community use agreement under the original planning permission for the new school on the site and this condition could be re-imposed under the current application should planning permission be forthcoming to secure community sporting benefits from the proposal. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of open space or land used for sports purposes.
- 7.3 The application site is allocated as a Locally Important Landscape Area (LILA) under Saved Policy E9 of the Northampton Local Plan, with the supporting text referring to the use of the land for sports purposes and as an attractive landscape which provides the setting for Wootton Hall. Policy BN5 of the Joint Core Strategy is also relevant to such landscapes and seeks to conserve and enhance them in recognition of their individual and cumulative significance and contribution to West Northamptonshire's local distinctiveness and sense of place. It is considered that the existing cricket pitch to the south of the site provides an important landscape feature of Wootton Hall Park. However, and as detailed above, the proposal would not prejudice the function of the cricket pitch. Furthermore, it is considered that small encroachment of the MUGA into the undeveloped part of the park would not have a significant impact on the character or appearance of the LILA.

- 7.4 Policies BN1 and BN2 seek to enhance existing green infrastructure and biodiversity as well as safeguard protected species. The proposal, however, has only resulted in the loss of a small area of grassed playing pitch and is not located close to any protected trees within Wootton Hall Park. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not have any unacceptable arboricultural or ecological implications.
- 7.5 Saved Policy E20 of the Local Plan and the guidance in the NPPF seeks to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. The proposal does not include any flood lighting and the minor re-siting of the MUGA would not materially affect its relationship with any neighbouring property. Furthermore, Environmental Protection raise no objections to the proposal. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of any neighbouring property.
- 7.6 The proposal has no parking or highway safety implications.
- 7.7 Northamptonshire Police have assessed the proposal and raised no safety objections.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 To conclude, the proposal would only comprise a small scale re-siting of the MUGA and it would not prejudice the sporting capacity of the site, trees or biodiversity or result in an unacceptable loss of open space or residential amenity. As such, as part of a balanced assessment, it is considered that the application is acceptable and it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions

## **9 CONDITIONS**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-DR-L-0115\_PL02, FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-DR-L-0120\_PL02, FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-DR-L-0125\_PL02, FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-DR-L-0130\_PL02, FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-SK-L-0100\_P01, FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-DR-L-0610\_P07, and FS0412-PLI-ZZ-XX-DR-L-0611\_P01.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the planning application.

2. Prior to the first use of the Multi-Use Games Area hereby permitted, a community use agreement for this sports facility shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise than in compliance with the approved agreement.

Reason: To secure well managed community access to the sports facility and to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport in accordance with Policy RC2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

## **10 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

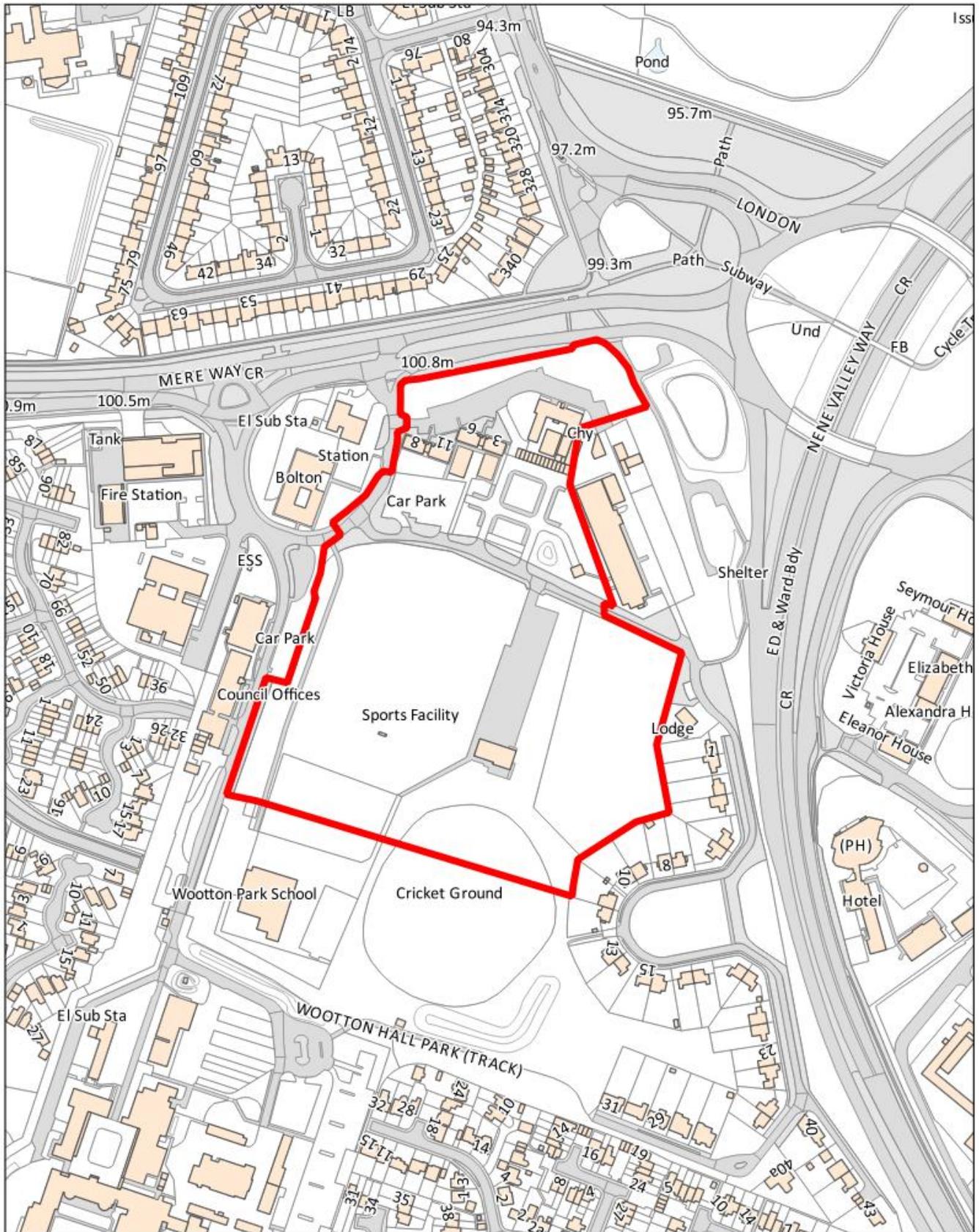
- 10.1 N/2020/0381; N/2020/0156; N/2019/0156; N/2019/0154; N/2018/0187; N/2016/0545 / 16/00015/CCDFUL; 89/1058; and 87/1078.

## **11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The development is not CIL liable.

## **12 SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.



Title: **Wootton Park School**

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