Planning Statement for Warnham Cricket Club

Planning application to extend the existing patio area, including the installation of level access to the pavilion.

1.0 Background, description of the site and proposal

1.1 Warnham Cricket Club was established in 1861, and moved to its current home in the centre of the village in 1896. The ground is leased from Warnham Parish Council, and the cricket club is responsible for maintain the grounds, the hedgerows and the pavilion.

1.2 The site is approximately 5.0 hectares in size, with a car park and pavilion on the northern edge. Originally a field on the edge of the village, the ground is now bounded by Hollands Way to the south and west, Lucas Road and Warnham C. of E. Primary School to the north, and Caryll Place to the east.

1.3 The current pavilion was built in 1981. There is a slabbed path, one slab wide (60cm) from the south-west corner of the car park to the front doors of the pavilion. In front of the central section of the pavilion, the path widens to two slabs, giving a narrow seating area for around 8-10 people to sit. There are two slab steps from this area up to the front doors of the pavilion.

1.4 Due to the steps, the is no disabled access to the pavilion, and is also restrictive for those with limited mobility, young or old.

1.5 The lack of a communal space by the pavilion, and the fact that the ground in that area slopes down towards the playing field makes it less inviting to spectators, passers-by and potential new players.

1.6 In recent years, Warnham Cricket Club has participated in AllStars and Dynamos, the ECB's national scheme for youngsters 5-8 years and 8-11 years respectively. As attendance numbers have grown, seating parents and siblings has become problematic.

1.7 The proposed enlarged and level patio area will enhance the appearance of the facility, encourage community involvement and provide access to the pavilion for people who are currently excluded.

1.8 The application site is not subject of any specific planning constraints in respect of heritage, ecological, flood risk or landscape matters.

2.0 Planning Policy Considerations

2.1 Planning law requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant Development Plans for this application are the (draft) Horsham District Planning Framework – Local Plan 2023-2040, and the Warnham Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2031.

2.2 As part of the development of the Horsham District Planning Framework, a Sport Open Space and Recreation Assessment was carried out in 2014. On page 5 of this document, it lists the Strategic Goals that HDC should base its greenspace strategy on. The first two are “Promote pride and community involvement in the District’s attractive and high quality environment” and “Ensure that the District’s greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities meet local needs and are accessible, of high quality, fit for purpose and well managed and maintained”. Developing the area at the front of the Warnham Cricket pavilion will increase community involvement, through providing a communal meeting space, and will ensure the facility will meet local needs and will be accessible to all.

2.3 In the Warnham Neighbourhood Development Plan – 2017 – 2031, item 3.3 on page 18 lists the objectives of the plan. Objective 1 is “To ensure that future development is consistent with protecting and maintaining the largely rural character of the parish.” Enhancing the cricket pavilion and making it a more attractive and communal space will support Objective 1. Objective 10 is “To maintain and foster Warnham’s community spirit.” As a sports club embedded in the centre of the local community, anything that improves the facilities and accessibility of the club will deliver on Objective 10.

Other material considerations

(i) National Planning Policy Framework

2.4 National policy is set out in the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2021. This replaced and updated the previous versions of the NPPF (2012, 2018 and 2019).

2.5 Paragraph 92 of the NPPF says that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure and sports facilities. This application would improve the safety and inclusiveness of the facility through the provision of a wide, level area leading to level access to the pavilion.

2.6 Paragraph 93 says that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning decisions should, amongst other things, plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as sports venues) to enhance the sustainability of communities. With the addition of the patio area, the pavilion will become a much more inclusive and communal facility.

(ii) Sport England – playing field policy and guidance (last updated December 2021)

2.7 Sport England oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of all or any part of, a playing field, unless the development, as a whole, meets with one or more of five specific exceptions. 'Exception 2' is where the proposed development is for ancillary facilities, such as a pavilion, 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. The patio area proposed does not impinge on the playing area at all.

3.0 Case for granting planning permission

(i) Compliance with Planning Policy and Guidance

3.1 With reference to the Strategic Goals of the Horsham District Planning Framework Sport Open Space and Recreation Assessment, developing the area at the front of the Warnham Cricket pavilion will increase community involvement, through providing a communal meeting space, and will ensure the facility will meet local needs and will be accessible to all.

3.2 Sport England's guidance (2021) says that they generally support the provision of new or enhanced ancillary facilities, such as changing rooms/pavilions, as they form one of the five specific exceptions in respect of development that is permissible on playing fields. The guidance goes onto say that such facilities; "…can play an important role in helping people to become and stay active as well as improving the use and viability of the playing field for sport. Along with enhancing the experience for existing users, they can make use of the playing field a more attractive proposition for potential new users." By improving access and communal space, the proposed development meets these criteria.

3.3 The Sport England Guidance says that facilities should be of an appropriate scale and comply with relevant Sport England and national governing bodies of sport design guidance. The guidance also says that they should have no significant detrimental impact on the principal use of the site as a playing field and its ability to accommodate playing pitches. This includes the need to maintain and/or provide appropriate safety margins and run-off areas around pitches in line with Sport England and national governing body guidance. The enlarged patio area does not impact the playing area of the cricket field, and maintains safety margins.

3.4 The new patio area is sited beyond the minimum boundary distance of 45.72 m (measured from the middle stump of the pitch) which is specified in Sport England's document titled 'Comparative Sizes of Sport Pitches and Courts (outdoor) - September 2015 update'. The proposed development would not impede the use of the recreation ground for cricket, or for any other sport or recreational purpose.

3.5 In pulling all these points together the provision of an enlarged patio area on the periphery of the recreation ground field would not prejudice the land's primary purpose for sport and recreation. The patio will enhance the grounds and pavilion which are the historic home for Warnham Cricket Club, which is a long-established community based organization, and will allow the club to fulfill its sporting and community aspirations.

(ii) Impact on amenity, character and appearance

3.6 The closest residential neighbours are to the north of the ground, behind the pavilion. The enlarged patio will be effectively invisible from these houses, as the patio will be masked by the pavilion. As the ground perimeter comprises of a 6-8 foot hedge, no other residential neighbours will be able to see any element of the new area.

3.7 The cricket ground slopes away from the pavilion, running down to the Village Hall in the south. Until a member of the public is within a few yards of the pavilion, the patio will not be seen, as it will be above eye level. The proposed seating and tables would be visible, but as these are intended to be of traditional wooden construction, they will not be out of keeping with the area.

3.8 The cricket club already use the recreation ground and its associated carpark. The provision of improved patio facilities will not intensify the use of the site and the existing access arrangements and parking provision will continue to be used in the same manner as it is now.

3.9 The development would have no material impact on highway safety.

(iii) Drainage

3.10 According to the HDC 2010 Strategic FloodThe site lies within Flood Zone 1 which is defined as an area at low risk of flooding from rivers (and the sea). The site is also shown to be at low risk of surface water flooding on the Environment Agency maps. The proposed patio will fall gently away from the pavilion, allowing and surface water to run off and drain into the ground, as it does currently. As the whole field also slopes away in the same direction, there will be no localised pooling of water.

4.0 Summary and conclusion

4.1 The proposed patio is intended to provide improved facilities for Warnham Cricket Club and meets the guidance given by Sport England and the ECB. The pavilion and patio will also be available for use by other sports teams, should they wish to use the improved facilities at the sports ground.

4.2 The pavilion and patio are located on a recreation ground, which planning policy seeks to protect from most development, but Sport England's policy provides a specific exemption in relation to the provision of ancillary sporting facilities such as this. The patio is located such as to ensure that the development will not prejudice or degrade the quality of the sport pitches and recreation function of the remainder of the site.

4.3 The development would not harm the character of the area, residential amenity or highway safety.

4.4 There are no adverse impacts arising from the development and, as it accords with the relevant policies of the Development Plan, the Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission.