PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

TO:	Planning Committee North
BY:	Head of Development and Building Control
DATE:	11th April 2024
DEVELOPMENT:	Stadium upgrades including additional capacity for 50 seated spectators, 50 standing spectators and spectator toilets. Construction of additional changing room. Installation of perimeter pitch fencing and alterations to existing stadium perimeter fencing. Additional turnstile adjacent to existing.
SITE:	High Wood Hill Sports Ground, Wickhurst Lane, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex, RH12 3YS
WARD:	Broadbridge Heath
APPLICATION:	DC/23/2074
APPLICANT:	**Name:** Mr Peter Thirkettle **Address:** High Wood Hill Sports Ground Wickhurst Lane Broadbridge Heath West Sussex RH12 3YS

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: The land is owned by the Council

RECOMMENDATION: To approve planning permission subject to appropriate conditions

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

1.1 The application seeks full planning permission for upgrade improvement works to the Broadbridge Heath Football Club ground, shown on the proposed site layout plan as follows:

- An additional stand added to the existing south stand to hold 50 seated spectators. This necessitates the repositioning of two existing stands and the two existing dugouts to allow sufficient walkway space for spectators. Fencing would be adjusted in order to accommodate the new stand.
- A 11m x 4m canopy for 50 standing spectators attached to the south elevation of the clubhouse.
- A new East Stands for 50 standing spectators.
- Reconfiguration of the existing turnstiles in order to accommodate a second turnstile.
- The location for the new toilet block (Option 2) which measures 6m x 3m and is shown to the west of the clubhouse adjacent to an existing storage unit.
- Additional hardstanding surrounding the existing two flood light columns along the south side of the pitch.
- Alteration of the existing 1100mm high pitch perimeter fencing to a solid panel rather than mesh as existing.

1.2 The upgrade improvements are presented as the following options (dependent on build costs):

Element of Works	Option 1 (Preferred)	Option 2
Spectator Toilets	Modify existing clubhouse. changing room 4	Purchase a container style. toilet block from 'Portable Spaces'
50 Spaces for seated. spectators	New Stand adjacent to existing South Stand	New Stand adjacent to existing South Stand
50 Spaces for standing. spectators	Construct a 4m x 11m canopy to the south elevation of existing clubhouse	Construct a new East Stand behind the goal to the, in the same style as the existing south and west stands.
Additional Turnstile		

1.3 Implementing Option 1 as set out above would create a total new floor area 23.5m2 and implementing Option 2 as set out above would create a total new floor area of 41.5m2. If both options are implemented together the total floor area created would be 65m2.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

1.4 High Wood Hill Sports Ground is situated to the south of the Bridge Heath Leisure Centre and Indoor Bowls Club, within the Built-up Area boundary of Broadbridge Heath. It is bounded to the east by the slip road from the A24, to the south by the A281 link road, and to the west by residential development. There is a line of trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order along the northern site boundary. Beyond the leisure centre and bowls club to the north lies the Broadbridge Heath Tesco and car park.

1.5 The site sits considerably below the raised level of the junction of the A24 and A281 at the southeast corner, with the embankment running along the southern and part eastern boundary populated by young trees. The western boundary includes a small fall in land at the southwest corner to the boundary walls of the adjacent housing. Wire fencing and a shallow ditch runs along the northern boundary of the site, demarcating the site from the Bowls Club and Leisure Centre facilities. The site is identified as being within a bat sustenance zone.

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The following Policies are considered to be relevant to the assessment of this application:

National Planning Policy Framework

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015)
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
Policy 9 - Employment Development
Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities
Policy 24 - Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection

Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 - Development Principles
Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
Policy 38 - Strategic Policy: Flooding
Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure, and Recreation

Neighbourhood Plan:
Broadbridge Heath has not been designated a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan (2018)
Policy M9 - Safeguarding Minerals

Supplementary Planning Guidance:
Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD (2017)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2017)

Planning Advice Notes:
Facilitating Appropriate Development
Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

DC/16/2700	Development of Broadbridge Heath Sports Facilities including pavilion building, sports pitches and a skate park	Application Permitted on 10.02.2017
DC/16/2272	Erection of covered stand for spectator seating and 8no 15m high floodlight columns for use ancillary to football pitches	Application Permitted on 23.02.2017
DISC/17/0277	Approval of details reserved by conditions 4, 5 and 7 to approved application DC/16/2700	Application Permitted on 26.01.2018
DC/17/2435	Reduction of overall size of approved skate park, alterations to layout and associated hard/soft landscaping (Proposed Non Material amendment to planning permission DC/16/2700- Development of Broadbridge Heath Sports Facilities including pavilion building, sports pitches and a skate park)	Application Permitted on 05.12.2017
DISC/18/0004	Approval of details reserved by condition 3 to approved application DC/16/2700	Application Permitted on 18.01.2018
DC/21/0472	Surgery 1 x Oak	Application Permitted on 30.06.2021

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Where consultation responses have been summarised, it should be noted that Officers have had consideration of the full comments received, which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

3.2 **HDC Landscape Architect:** No Objection

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

3.3 **Ecology Consultant:** No Objection

3.4 **Natural England (Bats):** No Objection

3.5 **WSCC Fire and Rescue Services:** Comment:
The nearest fire hydrant for the supply of water for firefighting is 200m away, 100m further than the 90m distance required for a commercial premises. If an alternative supply of water for firefighting is to be considered it will need to conform with the details identified in Approved Document - B (AD-B) Volume 2 2019 edition: B5 section 16.

3.6 **Southern Water:** No Objection

3.7 **Natural England (Water Neutrality):** (standing advice)
It cannot be concluded that existing abstraction within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone is not having an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites. Developments within Sussex North must therefore must not add to this impact and one way of achieving this is to demonstrate water neutrality. The definition of water neutrality is the use of water in the supply area before the development is the same or lower after the development is in place.

To achieve this Natural England is working in partnership with all the relevant authorities to secure water neutrality collectively through a water neutrality strategy. Whilst the strategy is evolving, Natural England advises that decisions on planning applications should await its completion. However, if there are applications which a planning authority deems critical to proceed in the absence of the strategy, then Natural England advises that any application needs to demonstrate water neutrality.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.8 **Broadbridge Heath Parish Council**: No Objection

3.9 **Representations:**
Two neighbour letters of Objection have been received, on the following grounds:

- Noise increase arising from balls hitting stands.
- Additional seating (similar to existing) would add to unnecessary noise situation.
- Concerns regarding poor visual screening from existing landscaping and maintenance
- Concerns regarding footballs encroaching on private land / gardens and striking cars that are correctly parked and the potential for situation to get worse as result of the stadium proposals.

3.10 **Member Comments:** None received.

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

4.1 The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the same Act, which sets out their rights in respect to private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles.

4.2 The application has also been considered in accordance with Horsham District Council's public sector equality duty, which seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people in a diverse community, in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In this case, the proposal is not anticipated to have any potential impact from an equality perspective.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

Background

6.1 Planning permission for the playing fields at the application site were granted in 2017 under application reference DC/16/2700, with the infrastructure to enable Broadbridge Heath Football Club to play on the northernmost playing pitch granted under application DC/16/2272. This permission granted infrastructure including two stands, fencing, floodlights and a turnstile. Neither permission placed a limit on the spectator capacity of the site.

6.2 It is advised that this is a Council owned site, however the application is being made through Broadbridge Heath Football Club. Broadbridge Health Football Club are seeking to improve their stadium facilities as they have been promoted to the next league and it is advised that the Football Foundation Ground Grading document (as submitted with the application) states that the stadium needs to comply with certain criteria in order to allow the club to play at the higher level in the football pyramid.

6.3 The planning use of the stadium would remain as an area or place for outdoor sport or recreation (Use Class F2 (c) (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms)).

6.4 It is advised that the Football Association have raised the issue of ground improvements along with mandatory requirements which Broadbridge heath Football Club need to comply with. Broadbridge Heath FC Committee have held various meetings to discuss options and to move the preferred improvement options forward (Option 1) in consultation with the following stakeholders:

- Football Association
- Football Foundation
- Broadbridge Heath Football Club
- Broadbridge Heath Parish Council
- Horsham District Council
- The Bridge Leisure Centre
- Tesco Superstore
- Horsham District Indoor Bowls Club

6.5 The applicants state in their supporting information that the relatively minor nature of the works required would in their opinion result in a negligible visual impact on the surrounding area, and that they consider scheme for the stadium improvements to be feasible.

6.6 Alternative locations were considered as part of the considerations with respect to existing access arrangements to and from these locations which included Wickhurst Green Housing Development (to the west); Bridge Leisure Centre; Horsham District Indoor Bowls Club; Tesco Supermarket.

6.7 It is advised in the submitted Design and Access Statement that the 'increased seating capacity is a mandatory requirement instructed by the Football Association and Football Foundation, however based on the current fan base of Broadbridge Heath FC, it is not anticipated that extra fans will be visiting the football club on match days. It is also advised that customers of Tesco have use of the dedicated Tesco car parking spaces, and the Horsham District Indoor Bowls Club have their own parking spaces in front of their building too, and so will be unaffected.

6.8 Usually, people visiting either Broadbridge Heath FC or The Bridge leisure centre use the Tesco car park as an 'overflow' car park in the event that there are no spaces available in the parking zones directly next to these buildings.

6.9 The application proposals have been considered as follows:

Principle of Development:

6.10 Paragraph 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) advises that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive, and safe places which:

a) promote social interaction including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other
b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and fer of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion…for example high quality public spaces
c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs … for example through the provision of sports facilities

6.11 The Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), set out the local policy framework against which applications must be considered. Policy 43 of the HDPF seeks to protect existing sites used for community facilities and services as well as encouraging the provision of new or improved facilities. Policy 42 (4) Inclusive Communities is also considered broadly relevant in that the proposals would address the requirement to coordinate services to fulfil the needs of young people.

6.12 It is accepted in principle that the proposed improvement works as identified above complies with the overall aims and objectives of NPPF 96 and Policy 43 of the HDPF, subject to a thorough examination against all other relevant policies and consideration of all material considerations arising.

Design and Appearance:

6.13 Policies 32 & 33 of the HDPF promote development that is of a high-quality design, which is based upon a clear understanding of the local, physical, social, economic, environmental, and policy context. Development will be expected to provide an attractive, functional, and accessible environment that complements locally distinctive characters and heritage of the district. Development should contribute to a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings.

6.14 The proposals would assimilate into the existing appearance of the site, which clearly operates as a football ground with associated infrastructure including two existing small spectator stands. The introduction of the proposed additional infrastructure, taken cumulatively as though all the facilities were to be constructed rather than only those set out in the two options, would not harm the appearance of the site. There are no changes proposed to the pitch itself of the floodlights which are all as existing. No trees are impacted by the proposals. The Council's Landscape Officer has confirmed that there are no landscape concerns. In this respect, the development proposals are considered to accord with Policies 31, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Amenity Impacts:

6.15 The HDPF at Policy 33 seek to protect the amenities of existing and future residents from adverse impacts resulting from new development.

6.16 The supporting details within the applicants Design and Access Statement advise that '*increased seating capacity is a mandatory requirement instructed by the Football Association and Football Foundation, however based on the current fan base of Broadbridge Heath FC, it is not anticipated that extra fans will be visiting the football club on match days*.'

6.17 Objections raised within two neighbour letters regarding potential noise impacts arising from the increase in use of the site and ball sounds hitting the ball stop fencing have been taken into consideration as part of the application assessment.

6.18 Officers consider that given the existing use of the site as a football ground, and the nature of the application to provide additional seating provision and covered standing areas for existing supporters visiting the football club, does not in itself result in an increase in the overall capacity in terms of the numbers of supporters capable of visiting the site. The improvements would however improve the football supporters overall experience when visiting the football club, as the provision of covered seating areas and covered standing areas would add to the enjoyment of the games, making spectators more comfortable generally and in adverse weather conditions. It is therefore considered that the type and level of activity generated following the proposed improvements would not in themselves result in an increase in stadium capacity or otherwise over-intensify of the use of the existing ground.

6.19 There is no indication that these facilities would increase the sounds of balls hitting the ball stop netting compared to existing, however it is noted that the existing 1.1m perimeter mesh fencing is to be replaced with solid fencing. This would create the potential for a different noise when hit by balls which may be more disturbing to nearby residents. To ensure this impact is acceptable a condition is recommended to secure details of noise mitigation to the solid fencing prior to its installation.

6.20 Accordingly, and subject to the recommended condition, officers consider that the proposals, when considered cumulatively as a whole, would not result in any significant or appreciable harm to private amenities of nearby residential occupiers in accordance with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Highways Impacts:

6.21 Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF promote development that provides safe and adequate access, suitable for all users.

6.22 The vehicular and pedestrian access to the site and into the football club ground will remain as existing with no changes proposed.

6.23 Concern was raised by the County Highways Authority in regard to the potential increase in team supporters given the proposed additional seating areas. Although WSCC recognise

that a potential increase was not likely to be significant, there were concerns that other football events might be held which could result in further demand for additional seating.

6.24 The existing football club has an associated car park and any overflow spills to the adjacent Tesco car park. WSCC Highways recognise that the use of the grounds for football purposes is likely to attract groups of people who would car share and as such it is assumed that the increase in demand on car parking spaces could easily be accommodated with the existing car park and overspill provision. WSCC have nevertheless requested that the '*applicants update their travel plan to encourage visitors to the club to travel sustainably where possible*.'

6.25 The applicants have submitted their updated Travel Plan which has been accepted in principle as a first draft by WSCC Highways. Advice has been given to the applicants to update their travel plan in accordance with the advice given. No objections have been made and no conditions have been requested. A condition has been imposed which requires submission of an updated Travel Plan to address the comments made by WSCC Highways.

6.26 Whilst the Highways Authority make reference to increased numbers of supporters, Officers consider that any such increase must be considered against the existing capacity of the ground, which is unconstrained by a planning condition limiting its capacity. The proposals have therefore been considered both cumulatively as a whole (rather than as options) and on the basis that they improve spectator experience rather than ground capacity. Taking this into account the proposals are considered to be acceptable and in accordance with Policy 40 and 41 of the HDPF.

Ecology:

6.27 Policy 25 of the HDPF aims to conserve the natural landscape and biodiversity and aiming to enhance biodiversity where possible. Policy 31 of the HDPF states that development will be supported where it demonstrates that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Policy 31(2) states that development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate.

6.28 The applicants have not submitted any supporting Ecology information. Notwithstanding this the Council's Ecology Consultants have carried out a desk top study in order to confirm the likely impacts upon designated sites, protected and priority species and habitats and identify proportionate mitigation measures.

6.29 The Council's Ecologist advise that '*the site lies approximately 11.9km to the northeast of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for which the qualifying feature is Barbastelle bats and approximately 16.6 km to the east of Ebernoe Common SAC for which the qualifying features are Barbastelle and Bechstein's bat. Therefore, the site lies within the 12km Wider Conservation Area for The Mens SAC and outside the 12km Wider Conservation Area for the Ebernoe Common SAC (Sussex Bat Special Area of Conservation Planning and Landscape Scale Enhancement Protocol). The LPA will need to prepare a project level HRA to assess the likely effects from this development on the bats of the Sussex bat SAC*.'

6.30 They have also advised that '*a number of European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) have been granted for bats within the local area. However, no Barbastelle or Bechstein's bats have been recorded within 2km of the site ((MAGIC maps https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx and Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre – accessed under licence). The proposal as it stands will not result in any increases of external lighting or the removal of any features which would cause severance to the flight lines of foraging or commuting bats from the SACs.*'

6.31 It is advised that any new lighting within the football stadium could result in adverse effects on the qualifying features of The Mens Special Area of Conservation (SAC). An appropriate

assessment has been undertaken in consultation with Natural England which concludes that a condition to control any further external lighting will avoid potential direct impacts upon Barbastelle bats and functionally linked land and avoid adverse effects occurring.

6.32 The Council's Ecology Consultants have advised that there are no additional impacts upon designated sites, protected and priority species / habitats have been identified as part of this proposed application. The proposals are considered to comply with Policies 25 and 31(2) of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality

6.33 On 14 September 2021, the Council received a Position Statement from Natural England. Information collected by Natural England shows that water abstraction for drinking water supplies is having a negative impact on the wildlife sites in the Arun Valley. They have advised that any new development that takes place must not add to this negative impact. One way of preventing any further negative impact is to ensure that all new development which takes place is water neutral.

6.34 The applicants have submitted a Water Neutrality Statement with their application which sets out a number of calculations and means of improving the performance of fixtures and fittings within the site. Whilst this is welcome, given this application is being considered on the basis that the overall ground capacity is not increasing, there is no indication that the proposed new infrastructure will increase water use compared to existing.

6.35 The development proposals will not therefore result in an increase in the overall number of football supporters and capacity of the football ground as there is to be no increase in the size of the football grounds or increase any community use of the site compared to existing. Officers therefore conclude that, the proposals will not have a Likely Significant Effect on the designated features of the Arun Valley SAC/ SPA /Ramsar site, either alone or in combination with other plan and projects and therefore the proposals have been 'screened out' from requiring an HRA Appropriate Assessment. Nevertheless, the applicants Water Neutrality Statement calculates that there is no increase in water consumption as a result of the proposed works as the baseline figure of 1.58 litres per day per person remain the same for both existing and proposed usage, that no offsetting or mitigation strategies are required to achieve Water Neutrality in this case.

Conclusions:

6.36 The principle of the Broadbridge Heath Football Club stadium at High Wood Hill has already been established through the existing use of the site for community and leisure purposes. The proposals relate purely to provision of improved facilities including the increase in covered seating provision and covered standing areas for the existing spectators visiting the football ground. The development is acceptable in respect of its principle, general design, and highways impact, and is considered to be acceptable in respect of its impact on neighbouring amenity. It has also demonstrated water neutrality. The proposals are therefore considered to comply with HDPF Policies 25, 31, 32, 33, 40, 41, 42 and 43 of the HDPF.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To approve full planning permission subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

1. **Plans list**

2. **Regulatory (Time) Condition:** The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

   Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

3. **Pre-Occupation Condition:** No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Travel Plan once approved shall thereafter be implemented as specified within the approved document. The Travel Plan shall be completed in accordance with the latest guidance and good practice documentation as published by the Department for Transport or as advised by the Highway Authority.

   Reason: To encourage and promote sustainable transport and in accordance with Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

4. **Pre-Occupation Condition:** Prior to the first use of any of the facilities hereby permitted, details (including location and specification) of the new ball stop fencing with details of noise mitigation measures have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No use hereby permitted shall commence until the new approved ball stop fencing associated with the use of the football club have been fully implemented and made available for use. The provision for ball stop fencing shall thereafter be maintained and retained for use at all times.

   Reason: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Policy 43 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) and as this matter is fundamental to control the development in detail in the interests of amenity and visual impact and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

5. **Regulatory Condition:** The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall strictly accord with those indicated on the application form and approved plans.

   Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to control the development in detail in the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

6. **Regulatory Condition:** No additional external lighting or floodlighting shall be installed other than with the permission of the Local Planning Authority by way of formal application.

   Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

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