PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

TO:	Planning Committee
BY:	Head of Development and Building Control
DATE:	5th August 2025
DEVELOPMENT:	Construction of 4No. 'Football Dugout' enclosures at the side of existing football pitches. Replacement of and installation of new fencing for site boundary and ball stop.
SITE:	Horsham Olympic Football Club, Robert Way, Horsham West Sussex, RH12 5QS
WARD:	Holbrook East
APPLICATION:	DC/25/0279
APPLICANT:	**Name:** Mr Simon Chilvers **Address:** Roffey Robins Football Club 15 Owlbeech Way Horsham RH13 6AW

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: The application site is located on land owned by Horsham District Council

RECOMMENDATION: To approve planning permission subject to appropriate conditions

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

1.2 The proposal involves the following:

- The installation of four football dugouts, positioned on either side of two 11v11 youth football pitches.
- The replacement and installation of new ball stop and boundary fencing at multiple locations on the site.

1.3 The dugouts are proposed to be constructed of a durable engineering brick with timber elements and a felted roof, fencing heights range from 3m to 7m and serve both spectator safety and ball containment purposes.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

1.4 The site is located at Dutchells Copse Playing Fields, Robert Way and is used exclusively for sporting and recreational activities, notably youth football. The playing fields accommodate two 11-a-side pitches currently used by Roffey Robins FC and associated youth teams. The site is adjacent to residential areas, easily accessible via local roads and

pedestrian pathways, and lies within a wider green infrastructure corridor. Existing ancillary facilities include a pavilion and parking area.

2. INTRODUCTION

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

2.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

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

2.3 **National Planning Policy Framework:**

2.4 **Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015):**
Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
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 40 - Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 - Parking
Policy 42 - Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 - Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

2.5 **Neighbourhood Plan:**
North Horsham has not been designated a Neighbourhood Plan area.

PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

NH/170/89	Erection of changing rooms and use of land for 2 football pitches (From old Planning History)	Application Permitted on 26.01.1990
NH/79/90	Erection of 3 m. and 5 m. high chain link fence together with landscaping for football pitches (regulation 4) Site: Dutchells Copse (Land At) North Heath La Horsham	Application Permitted on 18.07.1990
NH/22/92	Siting of store for football equipment Site: Dutchells Copse (Land At) Horsham	Application Refused on 24.03.1992

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 Arboricultural Officer:** No Objection - The proposed dugouts are near the northern boundary of the site, close to a tree line that screens the area from the A264 road. While part of the dugouts' footprint falls within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of an off-site tree, it remains within the acceptable 20% limit set by BS 5837. If built on above-ground slab foundations, the dugouts are not expected to harm the trees or affect their long-term retention.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Representations:

3.3 None received

Parish Comments:

3.4 **North Parish Council**: No Objection
No objection but Members would want to see procedures in place for rubbish to be removed after each game.

Member Comments:

3.5 None received

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

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

Principle of Development:

6.1 The application seeks planning permission for the construction of four dugouts and the installation and replacement of various lengths of ball stop and boundary fencing at the Dutchells Copse playing fields, Robert Way, Horsham. The site is in use for recreational

purposes, accommodating youth football pitches used by Roffey Robins FC. The application does not propose a change of use.

6.2 Policy 43 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) supports the provision of new or enhanced community facilities, including leisure and recreational uses, particularly where they meet an identified local need, are accessible to the community they serve, and are of a scale appropriate to their location. The proposed development enhances the function and safety of an existing well-used public sports facility. It will help support youth football and improve conditions for players, coaches, and spectators.

6.3 The Planning Statement confirms that the existing use will continue without intensification. The proposal aligns with the aims of national planning policy, which promotes healthy communities and encourages participation in sport and recreation (NPPF paragraphs 92 and 98). There is no loss of existing community or leisure facilities, and the proposal will improve infrastructure associated with outdoor sport, consistent with local and national objectives.

6.4 Accordingly, the principle of development is supported, subject to detailed design, amenity, and other material planning considerations.

Design and Appearance:

6.5 Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF require new development to be of high quality and appropriate design, reflecting locally distinctive character and respecting the surrounding built and natural environment. Development should relate sympathetically to its surroundings in terms of scale, massing, appearance, and materials.

6.6 The proposed dugouts are modest in scale, with a footprint of approximately 3.9m x 1.7m and a height of 1.8m. They are to be constructed of unrendered engineering brick with timber framing, a concrete base, and a bitumen felt roof. These materials are robust and suitable for an outdoor sporting context. The appearance is utilitarian and functional, consistent with the purpose and setting of the site, and would not appear intrusive in the open setting of the playing fields.

6.7 The fencing comprises a combination of new and replacement ball stop fencing:

- Fence A and D: new 3m high, 25m long fences.
- Fence B: replacement 7m high, 25m long fence.
- Fence C: replacement 4m high, 25m long fence.

6.8 In addition, existing boundary fencing is to be replaced with similar fencing. The fences are appropriately scaled for their ball containment function and reflect standard sports ground infrastructure. Their siting and appearance, as indicated on the submitted plans, are appropriate within the context of the open playing fields and will not detract from the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

6.9 Given the utilitarian character of the development, its recreational setting, and separation from residential boundaries, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of design and appearance and complies with Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Landscape and Trees:

6.10 The proposed development is located within a well-established area of open playing fields. The dugouts are to be positioned close to the northern boundary of the site, adjacent to a tree line which also acts as a natural screen from the A264. The submitted Arboricultural comments confirm that part of the proposed dugout footprint falls within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of an off-site tree.

6.11 However, the level of encroachment remains within the 20% threshold set out by BS 5837:2012, and the development can proceed using above-ground slab foundations, which are considered non-invasive and acceptable. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has raised no objection to the proposal, confirming that the works will not result in harm to existing trees or affect their long-term retention.

6.12 The fencing replacements and installations are proposed in areas already in recreational use and will not impact any trees or landscape features. Given the open nature of the site and the limited extent of the physical interventions, the proposal is not considered to result in harm to the wider landscape character or green infrastructure value of the area.

Residential Amenity:

6.13 The proposal is located within the Dutchells Copse playing fields, a large open space already in active recreational use. The nearest residential properties are situated to the south of the site along Robert Way, separated from the pitches by car parking, a pavilion, and intervening distances of at least 70 metres.

6.14 The proposed dugouts are modest in size and height (maximum height of 1.8m) and are set well within the site boundaries. The replacement and new fencing, ranging from 3m to 7m in height, is necessary for ball containment and safety, and will be positioned alongside the pitches away from neighbouring boundaries.

6.15 Given the nature, scale, and siting of the development, no adverse impacts are anticipated in respect of loss of light, outlook, privacy, or increased noise. The proposal does not intensify the existing use of the playing fields, which will continue to operate as a community sports facility. As such, the development would not result in any material harm to residential amenity and complies with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Highways Impacts:

6.16 Policy 40 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) seeks to ensure that development provides safe and adequate access, does not interfere with the safe and efficient operation of the highway network, and promotes sustainable modes of transport. Policy 41 further requires that sufficient parking and turning space is provided to meet the needs of the development.

6.17 The proposed dugouts and fencing form part of enhancement works to existing playing fields and do not involve the creation of new pitches or facilities that would significantly increase the level of activity at the site. As confirmed in the Planning Statement, the application does not propose any intensification of use and is not expected to increase vehicle movements, demand for parking, or pressure on the local highway network.

6.18 The site already benefits from existing vehicular access via Robert Way and an on-site car park adjacent to the pavilion. The surrounding road network includes pedestrian footways and is well-connected to the local area. No changes to access arrangements are proposed as part of this application.

6.19 Given the limited scale of development and its ancillary nature to existing use, the proposal is not anticipated to result in any adverse highway safety impacts. The development is therefore considered acceptable in terms of highway impact and is compliant with Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality:

6.20 The proposal is for dugouts and boundary fencing, which would not intensify the existing use of the site. The resultant water demand would thus remain as per the existing use of

the site. As such, there is therefore no clear or compelling evidence to suggest the nature and scale of the proposed development would result in a more intensive use of the facility necessitating an increased consumption of water that would result in a significant impact on the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The grant of planning permission would not therefore adversely affect the integrity of these sites or otherwise conflict with policy 31 of the HDPF, NPPF paragraph 193 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

6.21 Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) mandates that every development must achieve at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), unless the development qualifies as exempt under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, and that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that development may not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.

6.22 The development qualifies as ‘de minimis’ under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

Conclusion:

6.23 The proposed development seeks to enhance existing recreational facilities at Dutchells Copse playing fields through the installation of four durable and well-designed dugouts, and the replacement and installation of boundary and ball stop fencing. The scheme supports youth sport and meets both local and national policy objectives for promoting healthy communities and inclusive leisure access.

6.24 The development is acceptable in principle, would not result in harm to visual or residential amenity, and would not adversely impact landscape features or existing trees. No objections have been received from technical consultees or neighbouring residents.

6.25 Overall, the proposal represents an appropriate and proportionate enhancement to a valued community facility, in accordance with the Horsham District Planning Framework and the National Planning Policy Framework. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out in Section 7 of this report.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 To approve the application subject to the following conditions.

Conditions:

1 **A List of the Approved Plans**

2 **Standard Time Condition**: The development hereby permitted shall begin 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 **Regulatory Condition**: No 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).

4 **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).