Horsham District Council

DELEGATED APPLICATIONS - ASSESSMENT SHEET

APPLICATION NO./ADDRESS:
DC/24/1761
Steyning Football Club, Shooting Field, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3RQ

DESCRIPTION:
Demolition of 50 seat spectator stand. Erection of 150 seat spectator stand.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

DC/20/1027	Retention of the 6 existing 16m floodlight masts and replacement of the associated floodlighting system with modern lamp and directional floodlighting	Application Permitted on 05.08.2020

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE
The site for this application is the Shooting Field Ground, home to Steyning Town Football Club (trading as Steyning Community Hub Ltd), located in the northwest part of Steyning. The ground is located next to Steyning Grammar School on one side and residential houses on the other three sides. It is easily accessible, with bus services available nearby.

The stadium is currently served by a private access road leading from Shooting Field, providing four parking spaces. Additional parking is available in the surrounding streets and at Steyning Grammar School and Steyning Primary School.

The existing stand, which is set for replacement, has a 50-person seating capacity on a concrete base, covered by a tin roof that is in poor condition, suffering from leaks and inadequate protection from the elements.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION
This application proposes the replacement of the existing 50-person covered stand with a new 150-seater stand, which will include seating and a roofed structure to improve spectator experience. The new stand is essential to meeting the FA ground grading requirements, ensuring that Steyning Town Football Club can remain at its current competitive level in the Isthmian League, South-East (Tier 8 of English football). Failure to meet these requirements would result in automatic relegation in the 2025/26 season.

The new stand will be a light-gauge steel structure, installed on six small concrete pads, replacing the current solid concrete base. This design will improve drainage and surface water management compared to the existing setup.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Horsham District Planning Framework (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

Steyning Neighbourhood Plan:
SNDP3- Contribution to character
SNDP4- Improving our facilities

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-40) (Regulation 19):
Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
Strategic Policy 13: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Strategic Policy 19: Development Quality
Strategic Policy 20: Development Principles
Strategic Policy 24: Sustainable Transport
Policy 25: Parking
Strategic Policy 27: Inclusive Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Policy 28: Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

REPRESENTATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS RESPONSES
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

Consultations:
INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS
HDC Arboricultural Officer: No Objection- The trees along the western fence line of the football ground are not mature enough to be at risk from the proposed development. There are no arboricultural concerns.

The row of mixed deciduous native trees along the western boundary provides a positive landscape feature within the urban area. These trees are sufficiently far from the proposed enlarged building footprint and the associated working area.

HDC Environmental Health: No Objection – subject to conditions

OUTSIDE AGENCIES
WSCC Highways: No Objection - The Public Rights of Way (PROW) team reviewed the planning application using available information and found that Public Footpaths 2600 and 2719 pass along the western and southern boundaries of the site. The application does not impact or propose any changes to these footpaths, and therefore, the PROW team has no objection. However, if any alterations to the PROWs are proposed in the future, the applicant must consult with the West Sussex County Council Public Rights of Way team.

Representations:
8 representations have been received, objecting to the application on the following grounds:

- A threefold increase in seating is expected to bring more traffic, worsening an already problematic situation.
- often speed along residential streets, park inconsiderately, and block driveways.
- There is inadequate signage, leading to confusion about parking locations.
- Match days and training sessions run from 8:30 AM to 10:15 PM, creating a constant source of noise.
- Footballs frequently hit metal barriers, and foul language from players and spectators is a persistent issue.

- Drumming, loud music, and tannoy announcements already cause excessive noise.
- The club provides only 4 parking spaces, relying on surrounding streets and school facilities.
- Residents report illegal and inconsiderate parking on double yellow lines and in front of garages.
- Increased capacity would exacerbate these issues, with single-occupancy vehicles worsening congestion.
- The new stand would overlook residents' bedrooms and gardens, reducing privacy.
- Balls regularly land in gardens, causing property damage (e.g., broken greenhouse windows).
- Trespassers enter private property to retrieve footballs.
- Water runoff from the 3G pitch already floods nearby gardens, resembling a stream during heavy rain.
- Residents doubt that the new stand will improve drainage as claimed.
- The red and black colour scheme does not blend with the residential surroundings.
- The new stand and other recent additions (containers, cabins) resemble an industrial estate.
- Residents argue that the club is over-expanding beyond what is appropriate for a residential area.
- Floodlights remain on late into the night, disturbing residents and affecting local wildlife.
- Some neighbour's report hearing birds singing at unnatural hours due to excessive light.
- Some objectors suggest that Steyning Town FC should relocate to a more suitable location, possibly on school-owned land, to avoid ongoing conflicts with the residential community.
- Calls for better engagement between the club and residents to address longstanding issues.

(*N.B. For the purposes of the Council's Scheme of Delegation, 1 representation objecting to the proposal was received from an address outside of Horsham District*)

18 representations have been received supporting the application on the following grounds:

- Steyning Town FC is a major local sports hub with over 500 players across 32 teams, including a growing women's and girl's section.
- The club provides opportunities for young athletes, encouraging fitness, teamwork, and inclusion.
- Schools and grassroots football programs benefit from the improved facilities.
- The current 50-seater stand is outdated, leaky, and provides insufficient shelter for spectators.
- The new stand will offer modern, weather-protected seating for parents, children, and visitors.
- The new stand is no higher than the existing one and is set away from residential properties.
- Supporters agree that the stand should be painted in neutral colours (brown, dark green, black) to blend in with surroundings.
- The club is run on goodwill, sponsorships, and grants, and improved facilities will attract more visitors and funding.
- Increased attendance could bring economic benefits to local businesses.
- Many supporters argue that this is simply an upgrade to outdated facilities, not an expansion.
- The stand replacement is a requirement by the FA for the club to remain in its league.
- The Steyning Parish Council supports the project.
- Other football clubs in the district have undergone similar upgrades to meet modern standards.

Parish Comments:
Steyning Parish Council: No objection provided the football club increases the toilet facilities.

Member Comments:
None received

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY:
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.

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.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development:

Policy 43 of the HDPF supports the expansion and enhancement of existing community, sport, and recreational facilities where they provide a measurable benefit to local residents. The policy encourages the retention and improvement of such facilities, ensuring that they continue to serve the needs of the local community.

The proposal entails replacement of an existing 50-seater stand with a new stand with a capacity of 150-seats. The submission sets out that the enlarged facility is required in order to meet FA ground grading requirements relative to the level of competition currently taking place at the club. The provision of expanded and enhanced covered and seated spectator facilities would be supported by the above policy, with the proposal acceptable in principle subject to detailed considerations.

Character and Appearance:

Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF seek to ensure that development promotes a high standard and quality of design in order to enhance and protect locally distinctive characters. The policies also seek to ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of development relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views.

The western boundary of the football club benefits from intermittent planting which provides visual separation from neighbouring development. There is no objection to demolition of the existing stand, which represents a modest innocuous feature of the ground no particular design merit. The replacement stand represents a more sizeable structure, with a significantly larger footprint in relation to the existing. The replacement stand would though continue to be of a modest height with a functional design. In views from within the ground the stand would be seen in the context of an active football club, with the scale, form and design together with the retained separation from side boundaries sufficient to ensure no adverse impacts arise on the character or appearance of the wider surrounding area.

The visual impact of the proposal is therefore considered acceptable and in accordance with the above policies.

Residential Amenity:

Policy 33 of the HDPF requires that new developments do not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby properties and land.

The application site comprises an existing football club with a 3G pitch, lighting columns and related ancillary development / uses. It is acknowledged that the existing lawful use of the site creates a level of activity on the site which has generated representations from interested parties relating to the impact on traffic, noise, privacy, drainage, and general disturbance. There are however no planning restrictions relating to amplified music / announcements, hours of use or the number of matches which can take place at the site, with planning conditions limited to controlling the hours of use of floodlighting (ref: DC/20/1027). It would not be possible to impose new restrictions on the use of the ground, as any such conditions would not be reasonable or relate to the development for which planning permission is sought.

The scale, siting and design of the replacement stand and its resulting relationship with surrounding land and properties would not result in unacceptable harm through loss of light, outlook or privacy.

The replacement stand would not result in additional capacity within the ground but would provide additional seating for spectators. The average first team attendance is significantly below the overall capacity, and the provision of additional seating would not as a matter of course be expected to generate significant potential for additional or harmful levels of noise or disturbance at the site, with the use of the seating directly related to the existing lawful use(s) and activities within the football ground, which includes training and matches.

It is therefore considered that the amenity impacts of the proposed development are acceptable, and accord with the above policy.

Water Neutrality:

The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone as defined by Natural England which draws its water supply from groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Natural England has issued a Position Statement for applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which states that it cannot be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in this zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.

Natural England advises that plans and projects affecting sites where an existing adverse effect is known will be required to demonstrate, with sufficient certainty, that they will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect. The received advice note advises that the matter of water neutrality should be addressed in assessments to agree and ensure that water use is offset for all new developments within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.

The proposed stand would not result in increased water consumption at the site and, as set out above, the development would not result in increased capacity at the ground, rather additional seating should spectators with to. On this basis, there is no clear or compelling evidence to suggest the nature and scale of the proposed development would result in a more intensive use of the site, 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 180 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

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 must not be begun unless a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority and the planning authority has approved the Plan.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must show how the development will achieve the required minimum 10% BNG using the statutory biodiversity metric tool and must demonstrate how the habitats will be managed and maintained for 30 years, starting from the date the development is completed. Off-site gains and significant on-site enhancements will be secured over this period by way of a Legal Agreement.

- The development qualifies as 'de minimis' under Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

Other considerations

A representation has been received relating to drainage, noting the runoff from the 3G pitch which it is understood has caused flooding to nearby gardens. The proposed development would result in a greater roof area which has potential to result in additional surface water runoff at the site. The application sets out that a sustainable drainage system / soakaway would be used, and given the grassed area neighbouring the stand there appear to be no reasons why this could not be achieved. This approach would be acceptable in principle and it is noted that any Building Regulation requirements would apply to drainage.

Conclusions:

The proposed development to replace the existing 50-seater stand at Steyning Town Football Club with a 150-seater covered stand is a necessary and appropriate enhancement that aligns with local and national planning policies. The development meets the requirements of Policy 43 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), which supports the expansion and improvement of community sports facilities that benefit the local population. This upgrade is essential for the club to comply with FA ground grading standards, ensuring its continued competitiveness in the Isthmian League and its ability to serve as a vital community asset.

The proposal adheres to the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly in terms of promoting well-designed and sustainable sports infrastructure that contributes to social cohesion and public well-being. By replacing an outdated and deteriorating structure, the new stand will provide much-needed, modern facilities that enhance the spectator experience, improve accessibility, and help maintain the club's long-term viability. It also makes efficient use of previously developed land, avoiding encroachment on greenfield sites.

Concerns raised by local residents regarding issues such as traffic, parking, noise, privacy, and drainage have been thoroughly considered. While these concerns are valid, the development is subject to a range of conditions designed to mitigate any potential negative impacts. The applicant is required to implement measures for parking management, noise control, and privacy protection, as well as to ensure that drainage improvements are effective in addressing any existing flooding issues. The design of the stand ensures minimal visual impact on the surrounding area, and the proposed materials are consistent with modern sports facilities, ensuring the stand integrates well with its surroundings.

In conclusion, the proposal strikes an appropriate balance between the need for improved facilities at Steyning Town Football Club and the preservation of residential amenity. The development complies with the relevant policies, and the conditions attached to the approval will help to mitigate any potential adverse impacts. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable and should be supported to ensure the continued success and community contribution of Steyning Town Football Club.

Recommendation: Application Permitted

Conditions:

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**: 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).

4 **Regulatory Condition**: Hours of construction activities (including deliveries and dispatch) shall be limited to 08.00 - 18.00 Monday until Friday, 09.00 - 13.00 Saturdays and no activity on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

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

NOTE TO APPLICANT
It is understood that the application does not impact upon, or propose any alteration, to the Public Rights of Way. If however the applicant does now, or in future, propose any alteration to the public rights of way then they must first consult directly with West Sussex County Council, Public Rights of Way team (prow@westsussex.gov.uk).

The granting of planning permission does not authorize obstruction or interference with the PROW. This is a crucial point to ensure no part of the development obstructs public access. The PROW must not be obstructed by construction materials, vehicles, scaffolding, etc. This is also crucial to prevent interference with the public footpaths during development.

POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT
Statement pursuant to Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received, in order to be able to, where possible, grant permission.

Plans list for: DC/24/1761
(The approved plans will form Condition 1 on the Decision Notice of all Permitted applications)

Schedule of plans/documents **approved**:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Received Date
Location & Block plan	Proposed	02	05.12.2024
Supporting Statement	Planning	none	05.12.2024
Photos	Proposed New Stand	none	14.11.2024
Location & Block plan	Existing and plans and elevations	01 REV A	06.01.2025
Elevation & Floor plan	Proposed	none	06.01.2025
Photos	New stand location	none	14.11.2024
Photos	Old stand location	none	14.11.2024

DELEGATED

Authorising Officer sign/initial Guy Everest Date: 30.05.2025