

Application No: 09/4334M

Location: RYLEYS PLAYING FIELDS, WILMSLOW ROAD, ALDERLEY EDGE, CHESHIRE, SK9 7QW

Proposal: CONSTRUCTION OF ALL WEATHER SPORTS PITCH WITH SPORTS FENCING & FLOODLIGHTS

For THE RYLEYS GIRLS & BOYS PREP SCHOOL

Registered 24-Dec-2009

Policy Item No

Grid Reference 384397 379143

Date Report Prepared: 8th March 2010

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether it is appropriate development in the Green Belt or whether very special circumstances have been demonstrated. Its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, parking and highway safety, ecology, existing TPO protected trees, and any implications for the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

REASON FOR REPORT

The development comprises an area of between 0.5 hectares and 2 hectares and is therefore classified as a small-scale major development.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises playing fields that are used for football, rugby and cricket, a parking area and a pavilion that are owned and used by The Ryleys Girls and Boys Preparatory School. The site is bounded by Wilmslow Road on the west and the railway line to the east. Open fields are located on the opposite side of Wilmslow Road; Harden Park is located to the north; and the predominantly residential area of Alderley Edge is located approximately 70 metres to the south. The site is sited within the North Cheshire Green Belt and a number of TPO protected trees are located along both the western and eastern boundaries.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the construction of an all-weather sports pitch with sports fencing and floodlighting.

RELEVANT HISTORY

05/2394P Engineering works comprising improvements to playing pitches, reconfiguration of existing car parking, new access road and additional car and coach parking - Withdrawn 17.11.2005

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1 Spatial Principles
DP2 Promote Sustainable Communities
DP4 Making the Best Use of Existing Resources & Infrastructure
L1 Health, Sport, Recreation, Cultural & Educational Services Provision
EM1 (B) Integrated Enhancement & Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets - Natural Environment
EM1 (D) Integrated Enhancement & Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets - Trees, Woodlands and Forests

Local Plan Policy

BE1 Design Guidance
NE11 Nature Conservation
DC1 Design – New Build
DC3 Amenity
DC6 Circulation and Access
DC9 Tree Protection
DC13 Noise Generating Developments
DC64 Floodlighting

Other Material Considerations

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development
PPG2 Green Belts
PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

SPG Floodlighting for Sporting Activities

CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways: No objection subject to conditions

Manchester Airport: No objection

Network Rail: No objection subject to an informative

Sport England: No objection subject to a condition

Principal Lighting Engineer: No objection subject to louvres being installed on the floodlights.

Environmental Health: No objection subject to conditions restricting the time of use, the positioning and angling of the lights, the use of shrouds/louvres, and the use of cushioning to the kick boards during practice.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

Alderley Edge Parish Council: Recommend refusal of the application due to the height of the lighting columns and the impact on Horseshoe Farm and to a lesser extent the residences on Elm Crescent.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Three letters of objection were received from neighbouring residents on Elm Crescent that raised concern regarding light pollution and its effect on the surrounding environment, noise pollution, an intensification of the existing playing fields, concern over whether there is a need for the proposed pitch, whether there is sufficient parking, whether additional planting could be incorporated into the scheme, and whether the height of the lighting columns could be reduced. Residents also stated that they would prefer for the pitch to be located closer to Wilmslow Road or the pavilion, thereby reducing the need for the access path and moving the floodlights further away from residential properties.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A Planning, Design and Access Statement, a Floodlighting Design Proposal and a letter from the Headmaster of The Ryleys School were submitted with the planning application.

The proposal involves an enhancement of the existing outdoor sports facilities at the site with the construction of an all-weather playing pitch with floodlighting and peripheral fencing. The land use of the site will not change but the pitch will allow the area to be used more intensively than at present. The proposal represents a joint development between The Ryleys School and Alderley Edge Cricket Club – Hockey Section. The all-weather pitch will provide enhanced facilities for continued use by the school during weekdays and Saturday mornings and for use for hockey matches and for training purposes by the Club at weekends and on weekday evenings. The floodlighting is required to make full use of the pitch, particularly during the winter months. The Club currently does not have its own pitch and presently hires facilities for both training and matches and must travel from Alderley Edge to a variety of local schools and institutions including Wilmslow High School, Kings School, Fallibroome School and the Armitage Centre.

The Ryleys School use the playing fields for the teaching and playing of children's sports but they can become unusable during periods of heavy rain. At such times, many activities have to be transferred to the school site on Ryleys Lane however, with limited facilities for large group numbers, it does not allow for a comprehensive sporting programme to be delivered. The new development will allow for a continuous and regular use of the school playing

field site both within and outside the school day. It will provide a safe and reliable environment for pupils to participate in a variety of structured sporting activities including football, mini-tennis, hockey, netball, rounders, athletics, junior cricket and 'tag' rugby. The provision of floodlighting will offer the school pupils increased sporting opportunities in their after-school activity programme.

The location for the proposed pitch was chosen due to the ground being the most level area that would require minimum alteration and which would facilitate the most efficient grass pitches for the continued use by the school. A new footpath is proposed between the pitch and the existing pavilion.

The existing boundary trees and hedgerows will all be retained and the trees along the eastern boundary of the site, which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order, will be unaffected and will be protected during construction.

Full copies of the documents can be viewed in full on the application file.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The principle issues surrounding the determination of this application are the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, whether the proposed development is appropriate development in the Green Belt or whether very special circumstances have been demonstrated, the impact on parking and highway safety, nature conservation, TPO protected trees, and any implications for the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

Green Belt Policy

The site lies within the North Cheshire Green Belt. PPG2 states that within the Green Belt the carrying out of engineering and other operations and the making of any material change of use of land are inappropriate development unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. This was previously covered by Policy GC2 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan but this policy was not saved. The proposed development is not considered to be a 'building' and therefore it cannot be assessed against Policy GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation notes that in considering applications for floodlighting their impact on the openness of the Green Belt, or on the character of the countryside, should be a key factor in determining whether planning permission should be granted.

PPG2 outlines six objectives for the use of land in the Green Belt with the second being '*to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas*'. Therefore, the proposed development is considered to not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

The proposed all-weather pitch will introduce a significant enclosure into an otherwise open area but its height is not excessive and due to the light-weight construction of the perimeter fence it is considered that it is unlikely to materially affect the area's openness. The lighting columns whilst being 15 metres in height would be of a slim-line design that decreases in diameter as they increase in height. The floodlight is considered to be of an unfussy design and would be small in scale. For these reasons they are not considered to be significantly visible or have an adverse affect on openness. The inclusion of floodlights as part of the development is considered to be essential to the use of the pitch and the financial viability of the scheme. The lights can be shrouded and angled to reduce 'spillage' and the hours of use are capable of being controlled by condition. The all-weather pitch would increase the usage of the application site during periods of prolonged weather by providing a suitable surface for school children to use and it would provide additional community benefits by providing a much needed pitch for an existing hockey club that currently has to travel large distances to play.

Bearing these factors in mind it is considered that the proposed all-weather pitch and associated floodlights will not unduly harm the character or visual appearance of the Green Belt and that the benefits are sufficient to outweigh any harm. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development would not be inappropriate and would therefore comply with the relevant Green Belt policy.

Highways

The existing access onto Wilmslow Road and the existing hard surfaced parking area would be utilised. The site is located on the edge of an existing village, is located on a bus route with a bus stop located adjacent to the access, and it is currently used as school playing fields with associated trips to and from The Ryleys School. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would be sited within a sustainable location and the Strategic Highways Manager raises no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions.

Design

The proposed all-weather pitch would be sited on the eastern/southeastern part of the existing playing fields, 54 metres from Wilmslow Road at its closest point. The pitch would have dimensions of 91.4 metres by 55 metres and it would be contained within an extended surfaced area measuring 101.4 metres by 63 metres. It will be enclosed with 3 metre high fencing, including 300mm kick boards along each side with 5 metre high fencing with kick boards at either end. It would include dug outs for both teams as well as one for the referee. Floodlighting is to be provided by 8no. 15 metre high steel

masts, four on each length of the pitch that would provide a luminance level of 350 lux. Floodlighting is essential to enable full use to be made of the facility during the winter evenings and in order to justify the significant capital investment.

Whilst the site is located within the North Cheshire Green Belt the surrounding area has an urban character. Residential properties, a farm, a public house, a vacant former nightclub and a vacant pub/restaurant surround the site to both the north and south; a railway line with its associated paraphernalia bounds the site to the east; the A34 (Wilmslow Road) and its associated street lighting is located to the west. The application site is also located in close proximity to the predominantly residential area of Alderley Edge.

The scale, design and materials of the proposed all-weather pitch are similar to other types of synthetic pitches that have been built in the Borough. Members should note that two examples of similar sized all-weather hockey pitches sited in the Green Belt with the same number and height of floodlights have been previously granted planning permission under applications 03/0040P and 09/1329M. Notwithstanding this, each application should be treated on its own merits as the character of the surrounding area may be different. Whilst sited within a Green Belt location, the surrounding area has an urban character and is currently relatively well lit from the existing street lighting columns along Wilmslow Road and at the A34 roundabout, as well as from the existing built development. The proposed development would be more visually prominent than the current use of the application site as playing fields, however given the urban character of the surrounding area, the existing level of artificial lighting and the natural screening from TPO protected trees and a hedge along the boundaries it is considered that the proposed all-weather pitch with associated floodlights would, on balance, be considered not to be detrimental to the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

Members should also note that the height of the proposed floodlights enables fewer columns to be erected. If their height was reduced, more columns would be required in order to fully illuminate the pitch and a lower height would lead to an increase in light spillage which could be more detrimental to neighbouring properties and the character of the area.

Amenity

Three residential properties share a boundary with the application site ('Mayfield' and 'Horseshoe Farm' to the south and 'Harden Lodge' to the north). Other residential properties are sited on the opposite side of the railway line to the east of the application site. It should be noted that those properties that are closest to the application site have not objected to the proposed scheme. The applicant has submitted amended plans that have relocated the pitch 7 metres further north; further away from both 'Mayfield' and 'Horseshoe Farm'.

A Floodlighting Design Proposal was submitted with the planning application that provided drawings showing the predicted horizontal and vertical light spill of the proposed floodlights. A revised drawing has been received that shows

the location of the proposed pitch on a site plan with the horizontal light spill levels superimposed on top. This shows that only low lux levels would reach both 'Horse Shoe Farm' and 'Mayfield' to the south, and 'Harden Lodge' and the properties on Elm Crescent would not be affected.

Concern was raised regarding the impact of the proposed development on the amenity of the neighbouring residential properties, particularly 'Horseshoe Farm' in respect of light and noise. The Environmental Health Officer considered that the proposed hours of use (until 10pm Monday to Friday) would be detrimental to neighbouring amenity and requested that they were reduced. The Officer also considered that the floodlights should be fitted with louvres/shrouds in order to reduce light spillage/glare and their direction should be angled. He also asked that cushioning be placed in front of the kick-boards when the pitch is not in use for professional matches in order to reduce noise impact. The applicant has agreed to all of the Environmental Health Officer's recommendations and should be conditioned accordingly. In response to his concerns regarding the hours of use, the applicant has reduced them to:

- April – August inclusive: Finish activities by 8.30pm
- September – March inclusive:
 - (a) Saturdays and Sundays: Finish activities by 6pm
 - (b) Mondays – Fridays: Finish activities by 9.15pm (pitch activities such as matches and training to finish at 9pm with 15 mins to clear-up and secure)

The Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the revised times and considers them, together with the other measures that the applicant has agreed to, to overcome his concerns in respect of the impact of noise and light pollution.

The Principal Lighting Engineer considers that the careful installation of louvres/shrouds on the floodlights together with the proposed switch off times would eradicate any problems associated with light spill and nuisance to the neighbouring residential properties.

Landscape & Trees

A number of TPO protected trees and unprotected trees are sited along the boundaries of the application site. The Borough Council's Forestry Officer considers that the proposed pitch and associated access track can be constructed without any direct or indirect impact on the adjacent tree cover located both within and adjacent to the development site. Subject to conditions, he raises no objection.

Views of the development from the A34 would be partially screened or filtered by the existing mature trees and the roadside hedge. There is scope to plant additional trees in gaps between the mature trees and to plant a hedge across the disused field access if this is no longer required. The boundary hedge could also be gapped-up if necessary and increased in height. There is some scope for a limited amount of screen planting in the southeast corner of the playing field adjacent to 'Horseshoe Farm' where a hedge or a narrow scrub

belt with a few trees could be planted to provide some screening in the long-term. There is also scope for some tree planting along the southern boundary of the playing field adjacent to 'Mayfield' to provide some screening in the long-term.

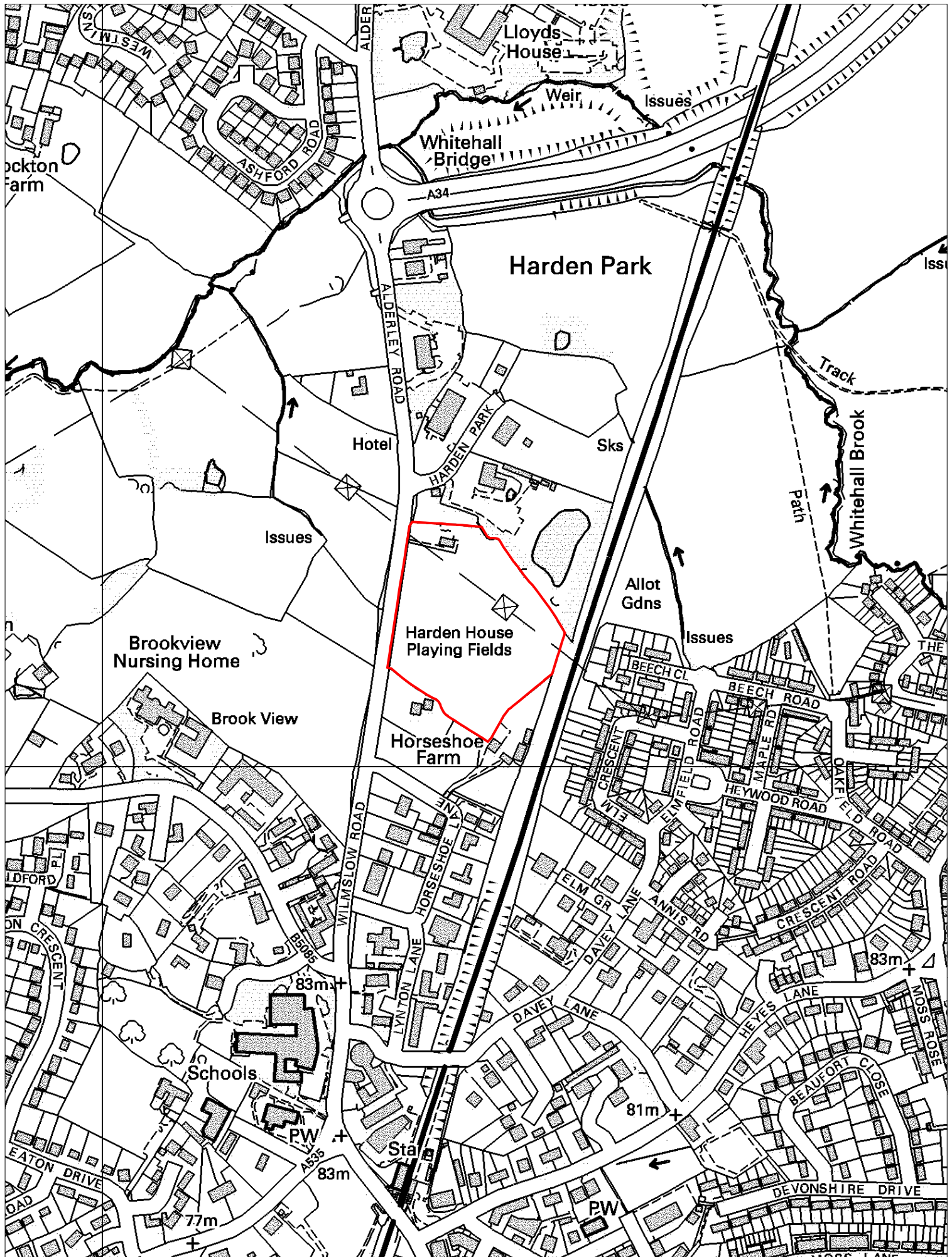
The length and direction of the path is dictated by the positioning of the other grass pitches, however, it is very wide (5.5 metres) and the proposed material of tarmac is not considered acceptable in this location. A reinforced grass construction is considered to be more appropriate in this location and would be less visually prominent. The applicant has stated that the footpath width has been dictated by the number of players/spectators that would walk to and from the proposed pitch, however, 5.5 metres is considered excessive and should be reduced to approximately 2-2.5 metres. Details of both the material and the proposed path's width should be conditioned.

Ecology

The application site is located in close proximity to a pond. The Borough Council's Nature Conservation Officer does not anticipate there being any significant impacts associated with the proposed development.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The proposed all-weather pitch will introduce a significant enclosure into an otherwise open area, however the urban appearance of the surrounding area together with the benefits the proposed pitch would bring to the local community are considered to outweigh any harm that the pitch and floodlights would cause to the visual appearance of the surrounding area. The re-siting of the pitch within the site, the amended hours of use, the use of additional planting and shrouds/louvres to the floodlights and cushioning to the kick boards are considered to overcome any potential noise and light pollution from the proposed development. It is therefore considered that it would not be significantly detrimental on neighbouring amenity. For these reasons a recommendation of approval is made, subject to conditions.



RYLEYS PLAYING FIELDS, WILMSLOW ROAD, ALDERLEY EDGE, CHESHIRE, SK9 7QW
NGR 384,390 : 379,160

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Application for **Full Planning**

RECOMMENDATION : Approve subject to following conditions

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A02EX - Submission of samples of building materials
3. A24HA - Provision / retention of turning facility
4. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
6. A01TR - Tree retention
7. A02TR - Tree protection
8. A04TR - Tree pruning / felling specification
9. A07TR - Service / drainage layout
10. A02AP - Detail on plan overridden by condition
11. Network Rail
12. Material and Width of Footpath to be Agreed
13. Parking Spaces
14. Construction Specification of All-Weather Pitch
15. Hours of Use
16. Use of Cushioning to Back Boards
17. Use of Shrouds/Louvres
18. Positioning/Angling of Floodlights