

Item No	Application No. and Parish	8/13 week date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(1)	17/00743/FUL Theale	28 th July 2017	Proposed change of use of land from agricultural to outdoor recreational and leisure facilities with parking. Land North of Englefield Road, Theale. West Berkshire Council

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:
<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=17/00743/FUL>

Recommendation Summary: Subject to no overriding objections being raised by Highways Officers to **DELEGATE** to the Head of Development and Planning to **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the schedule of conditions (Section 8.1).

Ward Member(s): Councillor Macro

Reason for Committee determination: The application has been called to committee by Councillor Macro on the basis that West Berkshire Council is the applicant and the proposal is associated with the provision of the new Theale Primary School, which is controversial in the area.

Committee Site Visit: 19th July 2017

Contact Officer Details

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1. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

No relevant planning history.

2. PUBLICITY

The site notice expired on 10th May 2017 and the neighbour notification letters expired on 24th April 2017.

3. CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Consultations

- Englefield Parish Council:** Initially no objections were raised however following receipt of the first series of amended plans objections were raised for the following reasons:
- 1) Barriers not strong enough to withhold travellers.
 - 2) Car parking not sufficient
 - 3) Footpath not wide enough to hold supporters, standing room and walkers.
 - 4) Boundary fence post and rail not adequate.
 - 5) Changing rooms not adequate.
 - 6) Impact on the condition of footpath 13/1
- Fisher German:** No objections however response highlights that pipelines maybe impacted on by the development. The applicant has been sent a copy of the response.
- Highways:** Request the submission of amended plans to show additional car parking. 25 parking spaces were originally proposed which is insufficient when consideration is given to the number of players, 22, plus a referee and linesman. On this basis no parking would be available for visitors or spectators.
- Amended plans have been submitted which show the provision of 44 parking spaces plus 4 disabled spaces and details of a reinforced surfacing system to ensure the car park can be used in all weather. Final comments from highways will be reported on the update sheet.
- Natural England:** No objections raised. Highlights requirement to assess impact on AONB and protected species.

Public Rights of Way:	Initial objections raised on the basis that the proposals would obstruct footpath 13/1. These objections have now been removed following the receipt of revised plans. See main report below for full details.
Sport England:	Supports the proposal with conditions.
Theale Parish Council:	Comments on revised plans are reserved until further changes received however initially an objection was raised for the following reasons: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Impact of footpath. 2) Concerns a reduction in site size would leave insufficient space for spectators. 3) Grass surface for parking area is inappropriate 4) Parking area of insufficient size 5) Boundary treatments inadequate in terms of the level of landscaping in a rural area and for security purposes.
Trees:	<p>No objection raised in principle to the proposed change of use of the site, and the level of landscaping proposed however additional tree planting within the native hedgerows is sought.</p> <p>The amended plans show the additional tree planting as requested and the proposals are considered to be acceptable.</p>
Ecology:	No comments received at time of writing
Drainage:	No comments received at time of writing

3.2 Representations – As of 14th July 2017

Total: 15 Object: 10 Support: 5 Comment: 0

Summary of Objections:

- Land outside of settlement boundary
- This youth footpath pitch seeks to replace an adult pitch and therefore is not large enough or adequate to meet the needs of local teams.
- Insufficient parking
- Insufficient space for spectators
- Field is part of the gap separating Theale from the hamlet of North Street
- Overhead cables and underground pipes cross the field
- Concern for the need for floodlighting
- What will happen to the remaining field
- Change of use will facilitate further development in the future

- No changing facilities etc are provided on site and are far away
- Danger when the ball crosses the road
- Impact on footpath
- Noise impacts when games are taking place
- Need to ensure access to the golf course is kept clear

Summary of Support:

- Welcome a new sports pitch and open green public space
- The new pitch will not impact on neighbouring users

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of any planning application must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan for West Berkshire comprises:

- West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026)
- West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007)
- Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF is supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

4.3 According to paragraph 215 of the NPPF, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

4.4 The West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) is the first development plan document (DPD) within the new West Berkshire Local Plan. It sets out a long term vision for West Berkshire to 2026 and translates this into spatial terms, setting out proposals for where development will go, and how this development will be built. The following policies from the Core Strategy are relevant to this development:

- NPPF Policy
- ADPP1: Spatial Strategy
- ADPP4: Eastern Area
- CS13: Transport
- CS14: Design Principles
- CS16: Flooding
- CS17: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- CS18: Green Infrastructure
- CS19: Historic Environment and Landscape Character

4.5 The Council Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) was adopted on the 9th May 2017. Policy C1 defines the settlement boundaries, replacing Policy HSG.1 of the Local Plan. The application site is

located approximately 0.15km to the north of the settlement boundary of Theale, a Rural Service Centre. In planning policy terms the site is within the open countryside. Immediately to the south of the site are existing playing fields which are also outside, but immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary.

- 4.6 A number of policies from the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007) remain part of the development plan following the publication of the Core Strategy. The following are relevant to this application:
- OVS.6: Noise Pollution
 - TRANS.1: Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development
- 4.7 The following local policy documents adopted by the Council are material considerations relevant to the development:
- Quality Design SPD (2006)
 - Planning Obligations SPD(June 2013)

5. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND PROPOSAL

- 5.1 Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a new under 15s football pitch on land north of Englefield Road with associated car parking, boundary treatments and new landscaping. This application is made following the approval of application 16/00724/COMIND under which full planning permission was granted for a new 1.5 form entry primary school in Theale. Located on the site of existing playing fields this proposal resulted in the loss of one undersized adult football pitch and it is this pitch that the applicant is effectively seeking to replace. A statement of public benefit has been submitted with the application. An extract from this document is contained below:

'Theale Parish Council booking records show over the last three years that the Northstreet Playing Field Pitches have been used on average for 55 games / matches per football season. Though the loss of one pitch is not a critical issue, maintaining pitch numbers to present levels is desirable and moreover a dedicated junior pitch will attract younger players – the remaining pitches all being suitable for adult games. Theale Tigers (through club – 6 to U16s) are not at present scheduled to play in Theale and the provision of a junior pitch may encourage the club to return to community play. Finally, Theale as a residential community is set to grow in the years ahead – there is an existing consent at Lakeside, western land to the North of Lakeside has been zoned within LDP and other applications for housing are emerging in the North East of Theale. Approving this application for a replacement playing field will help maintain the good level of playing field provision enjoyed at present within Theale.'

- 5.2 Whilst the extant permission for a new school forms part of the justification for this proposal this application is a stand alone submission and must be considered on its own merits.
- 5.3 In terms of the detailed design of the scheme the pitch will be accessed from a private road currently serving Theale Golf Club and the existing sports

pitches/playing field to the south. 44 car parking spaces are provided on site with an additional 4 disabled spaces. The parking area is to be surfaced using Terram 'GrassProtecta' heavy duty polyethylene reinforcement mesh (11mm standard grade). This reinforces the ground and is overlaid with grass.

- 5.4 A 1.3m high post and rail fence is proposed along the northern and western boundaries supplemented by a mix of native hedge and tree planting. Gates are also proposed within the fence line to allow people to retrieve any balls which are kicked off the pitch. The southern boundary, adjacent to public footpath THEA/13/1 comprises a 1.3m high post and rail fence only. Along the eastern boundary a new native mixed species hedge line is proposed along with a 1.8m high open wire-mesh fence to prevent any low balls from leaving the pitch.
- 5.5 During the course of the application amended plans have been received to show a number of amendments to the scheme, in summary these include:
- Amendment to the red line to exclude footpath THEA/13/1 and repositioning of the fence along this boundary to remove the need for gates on the footpath.
 - An increase in the number of car parking spaces and changes to the surfacing of this area.
 - Addition of trees within the planting scheme.
 - Provision of a 1.8m high fence parallel to footpath THEA/7/1

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:

- The Principle of Development
- The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
- Impact on Neighbour Amenity
- Highway Matters
- Public Rights of Way
- Flood Risk & Drainage
- Trees
- Ecology
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Other matters
- Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

6.1 The Principle of Development

6.1.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The key policies that are relevant to this application are Core Strategy Policies ADPP1, ADPP4, CS18 and Policy C1 of the Housing Site Allocations DPD.

6.1.2 The spatial strategy for West Berkshire district (as set out in Core Strategy policy ADPP1) is clear that development will follow the existing settlement

pattern and comply with the relevant spatial strategies (policy ADPP4 has regard to the Eastern area in which the site falls). The spatial strategy also sets out that most development will be within or adjacent to the settlements included in the settlement hierarchy, and related to the transport accessibility of settlements, their level of services and the availability of suitable sites for development. Within the open countryside only appropriate limited development will be allowed that focuses on addressing identified needs.

- 6.1.3 The application site lies outside the current settlement boundary. In accordance with Policy ADPP1 the applicant has sought to demonstrate that the proposal will meet an identified need for additional recreational space within Theale both at the current time and in the future given the planned demographic growth for the area.
- 6.1.4 Paragraph 69 the NPPF recognises that the planning system has an important role to play in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy and inclusive communities. The provision of sports facilities is one way to achieve this and the importance of ensuring access to such areas is recognised within Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy. This policy seeks to protect and enhance green infrastructure within the district and looks for new development to provide high quality multi functional space. This application meets with the aims and objectives of this policy.
- 6.1.5 While the site is within the open countryside it is accepted that the proposal meets with an identified need as required by Policy ADPP1 and the provision of new high quality recreational space meets with the objectives of Policy CS18 and the guidance within the NPPF, with particular reference to paragraphs 69, 70 and 73. As such, subject to compliance with the development plan as a whole the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

6.2 Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

- 6.2.1 The application site comprises part of an existing agricultural field. Views from North Street, which runs adjacent to the western boundary of the field, are largely obscured by an established hedge. A private road serving the golf club and existing playing fields runs alongside the southern boundary and from here views of the site can be obtained. The eastern boundary is adjacent to Theale Golf Course. To the south of the access road lies the existing playing fields, beyond which is the built up settlement of Theale.
- 6.2.2 Footpath THEA/13/1 runs parallel to the southern boundary and THEA/7/1 runs along the eastern edge of the site. Following amendments to the scheme both footpaths are outside of the application site.
- 6.2.3 The site sits within and forms part of the rural landscape which is important to the setting of Theale. Notwithstanding this however the neighbouring land uses to the east and south both comprise of recreational facilities i.e. the golf course to the east and playing fields to the south. As such it is considered that the proposed sports pitch will compliment and site comfortably alongside

these existing land uses. Furthermore these existing uses demonstrate how such low scale development can sit discreetly within the rural landscape with little visual impact. Given the nature and scale of the proposed sports pitch, the use of post and rail fencing and native mixed species planting to mark the boundaries and a sympathetic car parking surfacing treatment which is overlaid with grass, it is considered that the proposal can similarly be accommodated within this rural environment without causing any significant adverse visual harm.

- 6.2.4 Concern has been raised by the Parish and some residents for the level of security around the site. Officers welcome the use of post and rail fencing as this style of fencing is complementary to the rural character of the site and reflective of that used elsewhere locally. The site is fully enclosed with gates and highly visible from the private access road serving the golf course which adds an element of natural surveillance. As such it is considered that the proposal provides a successful balance between enclosing the site and respecting the rural environment.
- 6.2.5 The proposal will be particularly visible from the two footpaths which border the site however for the reasons set out above, the design of the scheme is not considered to result in a harmful visual impact.
- 6.2.6 Approximately 0.7km to the west of the site lies the edge of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). By reason of the distance and the nature of the proposals it is not considered that the proposed sports pitch would have a harmful impact on the AONB or its setting.
- 6.2.7 Concern has been raised for the need for flood lighting and the impact of this on the open countryside. No flood lighting or lighting of any type is proposed as part of this scheme. A condition has also been attached to remove permitted development rights for external lighting and requires that a formal planning application is made for that purpose should it be necessary.
- 6.2.8 The NPPF and Core Strategy place great weight on the protection of the natural environment and promote high quality design. For the reasons set out above it is considered that the proposed scheme can be accommodated without any significant adverse harm on the character of the area or to the AONB and as such the scheme accordance with Policies ADPP4, CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy and the guidance within the NPPF.

6.3 Impact on neighbouring amenity

- 6.3.1 Securing a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings is one of the core planning principles of the Framework. Core Strategy Policy CS14 states that new development must make a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire.
- 6.3.2 Concern has been raised by some objectors for the impact of noise from the sports pitch when games are in play. Given the distance of the site from the nearest residential property, the frequency of use, and that only a single pitch

is proposed, it is not considered that the proposal would generate sufficient noise to cause a material adverse impact.

- 6.3.3 To conclude it is not considered that the proposal will result in any material adverse impacts that would be deemed to be harmful to the golf course or other users of the neighbouring sports pitches. As such the proposal complies with Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy and the guidance within the NPPF.

6.4 Highways Matters

- 6.4.1 Amended plans have been sought to address concerns for the shortfall in the number of car parking spaces proposed. Originally 25 spaces were proposed which is considered to be insufficient when one considers that a football team is made up of 22 players plus a referee and linesman plus the need for parking for spectators and visitors.

- 6.4.2 The revised plans now show the provision of 44 parking spaces plus 4 disabled spaces. Details of a surface ground reinforcement system have also been provided which is to be overlaid with grass. This Terram 'GrassProtecta' heavy duty polyethelene reinforcement mesh will ensure the parking area can be used in bad weather and provide a reinforced surface for parking. Comments from the Highways officer on the amended plans are to be provided on the update sheet.

6.5 Public Rights of Way

- 6.5.1 The application site is bound by footpath THEA/13/1 which runs parallel to the southern site boundary and footpath THEA/7/1 which borders the eastern boundary. Following the submission of amended plans both footpaths are located outside of the application site.

- 6.5.2 With respect to footpath THEA/13/1 amended plans have been submitted which show the proposed post and rail fencing to be positioned to the north of this public right of way ensuring it remains unobstructed by the proposals. The presence of a vehicular crossing point over the right of way is acceptable subject to appropriate signage to warn drivers of the existence of the footpath and footpath users that vehicles will be turning into and out of the site. The submission of these details and the construction of the signage on site has been secured by condition.

- 6.5.3 A 1.8m high wire mesh fence has been provided to protect walkers using footpath THEA/7 as this path runs perpendicular to the goal. Given the orientation of the pitch and the removal of some of the existing planting along this boundary such a fence is considered to be necessary. It should however be noted that a new native mixed species hedge is proposed along this boundary however it will take time to establish.

- 6.5.4 The Public Rights of Way officer has requested that footpath THEA/13/1 should be levelled and grassed to mitigate the effects of the development. Such works have been considered by officers however given the intensity of

the new use and the number of additional people it will result in using the path this is not considered to be a reasonable or justified request and as such has not been taken forward.

- 6.5.5 In conclusions no objections are raised by the Public Rights of Way Officer and the proposal is not considered to have a materially adverse impact on the public rights of way around the site. As such the proposal is considered to accord with Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 75 of the NPPF which states that planning policies should protect public rights of way.

6.6 Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.6.1 The site lies within Flood Zone 1. The NPPF seeks to direct new development to such sites which are deemed to be at a low risk of flooding. Given the size of the site, and the low level of risk, a Flood Risk Assessment is not required. Furthermore given the nature of the works, which do not involve the creation of any areas of hard standing, the proposals are not considered to have any adverse impacts in this regard.

6.7 Trees

- 6.7.1 Amended plans have been received during the course of the application to provide for additional planting around the site boundaries. The proposals include a mix of native species to include hedges and new trees. This will ensure the proposal over time blends into the existing landscape. As such the proposal accords with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy.

6.8 Ecology:

- 6.8.1 The application has been supported by a preliminary ecological appraisal report and a site habitat plan. During the survey no signs of badgers were identified. It is considered that the woodland to the north west of the site in conjunction with the hedgerow to the north may provide strong linear features which bats could use for transit and foraging. It is recognised that some trees are to be removed from this boundary however these are immature and their removal is not considered to significantly alter the ecological value of this corridor. The report concludes that the scheme will not have a material impact on the ecological value of the site and recommendations are made regarding the timing and phasing of some works and the need for licenses.
- 6.8.2 No comments have been received from the Council's Ecologist. The submitted Protected Species Assessment has been referenced as an approved document so the measures and recommendations identified within the report with regards to timing of works and phasing for example are adhered to.

6.9 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.9.1 The proposed development is not liable for CIL.

6.10 Other Matters:

6.10.1 Concern has been raised as to where spectators and visitors will stand to watch the game. There is room on both touch lines for spectators.

6.10.2 Concern has been raised as to what will happen to the remainder of the field. This agricultural land remains outside of the application site and the use of the land is unaffected by these proposals. The granting of this permission would not change the planning status/use of this neighbouring land.

6.11 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

6.11.1 The NPPF places a strong emphasis on sustainable development. All planning applications must result in sustainable development with consideration being given to economic, social and environmental sustainability aspects of the proposal.

6.11.2 The proposal will meet with an identified local need to provide for new recreational facilities within Theale serving both the existing community and meeting with the long term demands as the population grows. The scheme will deliver a clear social benefit. The proposal is not considered to result in any significant adverse visual harm and as such the environmental strand of sustainable development has been met with. The scheme will not deliver any direct economic benefits however it may support existing clubs and the construction phase may support existing businesses/suppliers. The economic benefits are considered to be neutral however the scheme will deliver strong social and community benefits.

7. Conclusion

7.1 For the reasons set out above it is recommended that the application be approved.

8. Recommendation

Subject to no overriding objections being raised by Highways Officers to **DELEGATE** to the Head of Development and Planning to **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the schedule of conditions (Section 8.1).

8.1 Recommended conditions

1 Time Limit

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 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2 Plans

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with drawing title numbers:

- Proposed Site Plan drawing number PL301 rev. 9
- Hard and Soft Landscape GA drawing number LLD1063/01 rev. 10
- Detailed Plant Schedule and Planting Specification July 2017
- Landscape Specification July 2017
- Gate & Fence Details drawing number PL302 rev. 1
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report, Protected Species Assessment October 2016

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 Boundary treatment

The sports pitch hereby approved shall not be brought into use until the fencing has been erected in accordance with the details shown on drawing number LLD1063/01 rev.10 titled Hard and Soft Landscape GA and drawing titled Gate & Fence Details drawing number PL302 rev. 1. The boundary treatment shall thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: The boundary treatments are an important element in the design of the scheme. This condition is imposed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006).

4 Landscaping

All landscape works shall be completed in accordance with the submitted plans, schedule of planting and retention, programme of works and other supporting information including drawing numbers LLD1063/01 REV 10 dated 13.10.2016 and supported by the Detailed plant schedule and planting specification ref LLD1063/KM/06.07.17. Any trees, shrubs or hedges planted in accordance with the approved scheme which are removed, die, or become diseased within five years from completion of this development shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees, shrubs or hedges of a similar size and species to that originally approved.

Reason: To ensure the implementation of a satisfactory scheme of landscaping in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF and Policies CS14, CS18 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy July 2006-2026.

5 External Lighting

Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order with or without modification), no external lighting shall be installed across the site without planning permission being granted by the Local Planning Authority on an application made for that purpose.

Reason: To have regard to the setting of the development within the open countryside and to protect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and wildlife. This condition is imposed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework

(March 2012), Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006).

6 Signage for PROW and cars

The sports pitch hereby approved shall not be brought into use until details of the proposed signage to be erected at the vehicular entrance into the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter constructed and retained in accordance with the approved details. The signage must warn vehicle drivers of the existence of the footpath, and footpath users of the fact that vehicles will be turning into and out of the site across the footpath. The submitted details shall include a plan to show where each sign will be positioned, what it will say and its appearance.

Reason: To ensure the safety of users of footpath THEA/13/1 in accordance with Policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and paragraph 75 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informative:

1. No cars shall be parked on or within the legal width of the footpath.