

28 September 2015

West Ham United FC Training Ground & Sports Stadium**in the London Borough of Havering****planning application no.P0954.15****Strategic planning application stage 1 referral**

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended); Greater London Authority Acts 1999 and 2007; Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008.

The proposal

Redevelopment of training grounds and sports stadium involving alterations and extensions to the existing buildings on site.

The applicant

The applicant is **West Ham United Football Club**, and the architect is **Sursham Tompkins**.

Strategic issues

The key strategic planning issue which is assessed in this short report is the acceptability of the proposed **redevelopment** on **Green Belt**. Other planning issues including **transport** concerns that TfL may have can be dealt with by the Council.

Recommendation

That Havering Council be advised that the application complies with the London Plan, for the reasons set out in paragraph 24 of this report and does not need to be referred back to the Mayor. The Council should, however, take account of the comments made in that paragraph of this report.

Context

1 On 20 June 2015 the Mayor of London received documents from Havering Council notifying him of a planning application of potential strategic importance to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of The Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor has until 30 September 2015 to provide the Council with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons for taking that view. The Mayor may also provide other comments. This report sets out information for the Mayor's use in deciding what decision to make.

2 The application is referable under Category 3D of the Schedule of the Order 2008: "Development- (a) on land allocated as Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land in the development plan, in proposals for such a plan, or in proposals for the alteration or replacement of such a plan; and (b) which would involve the construction of a building with a floorspace of more than 1,000 square metres or a material change in the use of such a building".

3 Once Havering Council has resolved to determine the application, it is required to refer it back to the Mayor for his decision, as to whether to direct refusal or allow the Council to determine it itself,

unless otherwise advised. In this instance the Council does not need to refer the application back to the Mayor.

4 The Mayor of London's statement on this case will be made available on the GLA website www.london.gov.uk.

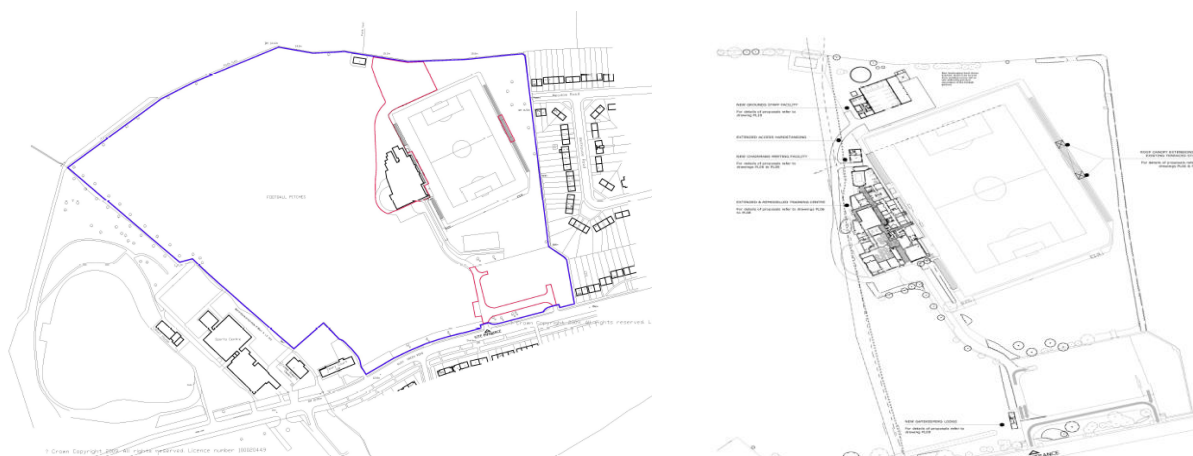
Site description

5 The application site has an area of 11.2ha and is located within Rush Green in Havering on land designated as Green Belt.

6 The buildings on the site include a covered sports stand that seats 400, with a range of buildings connected to this that formed the Sports and Social Club that comprises three bars, kitchen and changing facilities. There is also a groundsman's store adjacent to the northern boundary.

7 Immediately surrounding the Sports and Social Club building is a general circulation area, with access routes to the rear of the building and to the pavilion, along with a raised seating area and some ancillary parking for deliveries.

8 There are a number of football pitches on the site, with five training pitches and the main pitch has spectator areas. The site is accessed from the A124 (Wood Lane) that forms the southern boundary. A large parking area is immediately adjacent to the access with 160 parking spaces. North of the site is the Crowlands Heath Golf Club and to the east of the site are residential properties.



The existing application site and the proposed redevelopment, respectively: Source- Applicant's planning documents.

Details of the proposal

9 The planning application is for alterations and extensions to the existing buildings on the site including remodelling of the club building and extension of canopy over stands; erection of new offices, groundsman's building, gatekeeper lodge and irrigation plant enclosure and tank; extension to hardstanding.

Case history

10 In 2009, a planning permission was granted for a new groundsman's building, a security office at the entrance of the site and external alterations to the sports club building. The groundsman's building and security office proposed in 2009 are of broadly the same size and position as those now proposed as part of this current application.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

11 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- Green Belt *London Plan;*

12 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan in force for the area Havering Core Strategy and Development Plan Policies DPD (2008), and the 2015 London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2011).

13 The following are also relevant material considerations:

- The National Planning Policy Framework, Technical Guide to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.
- The Minor Alteration to the London Plan (MALP, 2015).

Principle of land use – Redevelopment of football facilities on Green Belt

14 The planning statement states that application site was formerly used as a private sports ground for Ford United Football Club. Since 2009 it has been owned by West Ham United Football Club, who has used it for youth and reserve team training, as well as being used as the main base for Grays Athletic Football Club. The site has never been open for general public use; however some pitches were rented to local teams.

15 The application site is part of a larger area identified as Green Belt. The London Plan (Policy 7.16) and National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 89) set out forms of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt. All other forms of development are, by definition, 'inappropriate'. In order for 'inappropriate' development to be acceptable in the Green Belt, very special circumstances must apply.

16 The planning statement points out that the main aim of the alterations and extension to the existing buildings on the site is to provide the required facilities that are necessary for a Premier League Football Club to maintain its status, a standard requirement by the Football Association.

17 The planning statement states that the proposal is for West Ham United Football Club to use the site as its main training centre for the first team squad along with holding Reserve Team games using the existing stand terracing for the supporters. WHUFC currently train at a facility in Chadwell Heath, however, this is a shared facility by the youth teams and first team. The applicant has asserted that this causes serious logistical problems in providing a suitable level of service to all the parties due to the constant changes in the requirements of the various levels of training and facilities. The statement further reiterates that as part of this proposal, some youth teams would remain at Chadwell Heath in their own facility and the level of attention and focus on their development would improve given that they would not have to share the premises, therefore the proposed redevelopment should be allowed and granted planning permission.

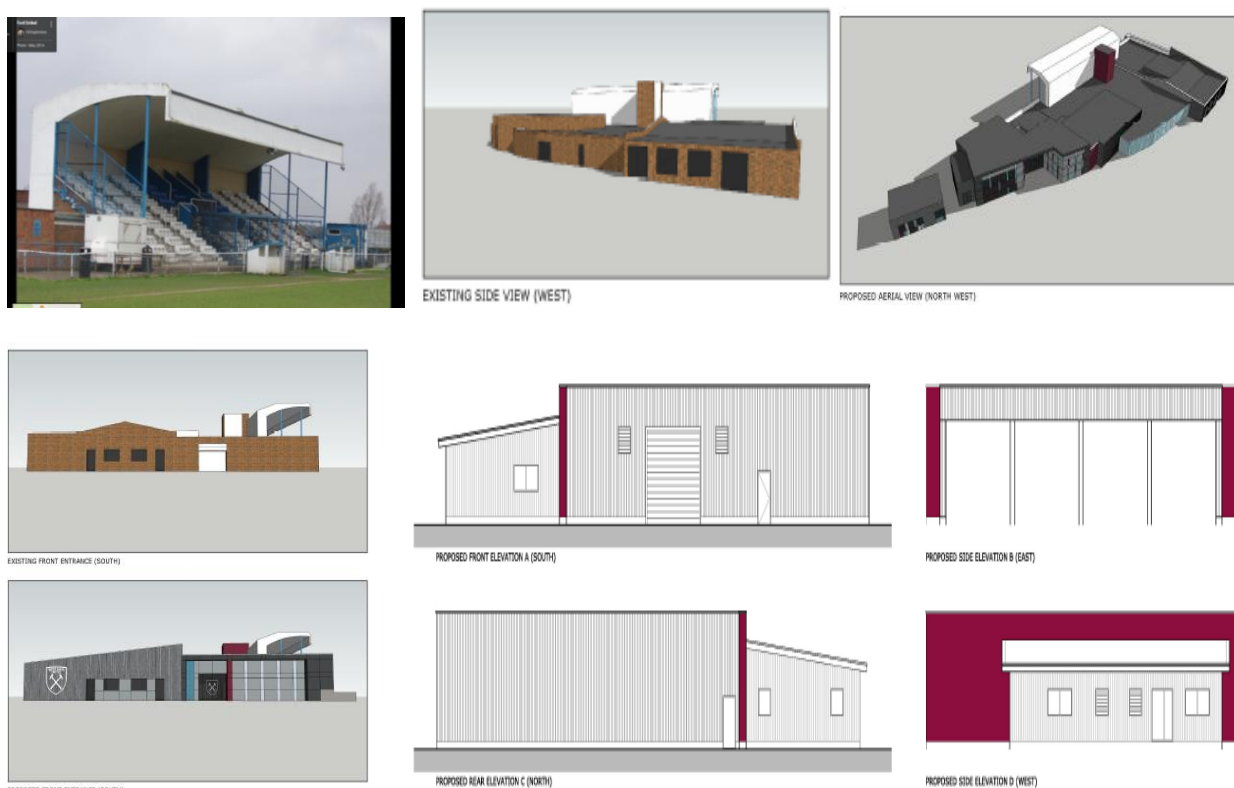
18 GLA Officers' assessment: This planning application is assessed categorising it into two elements: a) the part of the redevelopment which is appropriate (extension of the canopy over the stands, etc.) and b) the element which constitutes new built/enclosed structures which will have adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt are inappropriate (erection of new offices, gatekeeper lodge, irrigation plant enclosure and tank and extension to hard standing), therefore very special circumstances should exist that justify the redevelopment.

- The appropriate element: Although the extended canopy stand will be larger than existing, it is an appropriate facility for outdoor sports as its partial enclosure will have minimal impact on the openness of the Green Belt and that it will have a scale one could reasonably expect for a club of this nature. Furthermore, the proposed redevelopment is for ancillary facilities associated with the Football Club on previously developed land.
- The inappropriate element: As discussed above, the erection of the new offices, staff facilities and the irrigation plant enclosure (in which the maximum height of the buildings is not over 5 metres with a combined floor space of less than 1,500sqm) are categorised in this element of the proposal and very special circumstances are required. As stated in the planning statement the groundman's building is no larger than what is essential to house all the equipment and machinery used to maintain the pitches. The extension and alterations to

the main building include an on-site boardroom and a large indoor area to provide a hydrotherapy pool and treatment area and these extensions would be to the rear of the building away from Rush Green Road thus considered to have minimal visual impact. The applicant has justified these elements of the proposal in the context of paragraph 89 of the NPPF and that these facilities are staff facilities include are necessary for a Premier League Football Club to maintain its status, a standard requirement by the Football Association. These justifications have been accepted as very special circumstances.

- The proposal is supported as the facility enhances the provision of sports and recreation and is consistent with policy 3.19 of the London Plan. This assessment is consistent with the Mayor’s consideration of other similar proposals (Crystal Palace FC (PDU/1244), Tottenham Hotspur FC (D&P/1330d) and Queens Park Rangers FC (D&P/3242) on sites located on Green Belt and/or MOL, in which the proposals are supported).

19 In summary, the proposed redevelopment of the Sports Ground on Green Belt is supported in land use principle.



Existing and proposed elevations: Source-courtesy of google map and applicant’s design and access statement.

Visual impact assessment

20 The planning application provides sufficient information with which to assess the visual impact of the proposed redevelopment in comparison with the existing built form, on the openness of the Green Belt, which is considered to be limited (see the figures above.)

Local planning authority’s position

21 Havering Council planning officers have yet to confirm their position.

Legal considerations

22 Under the arrangements set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2008 the Mayor is required to provide the local planning authority with a statement setting out whether he considers that the application complies with the London Plan, and his reasons

for taking that view. Unless notified otherwise by the Mayor, the Council must consult the Mayor again under Article 5 of the Order if it subsequently resolves to make a draft decision on the application, in order that the Mayor may decide whether to allow the draft decision to proceed unchanged or direct the Council under Article 6 of the Order to refuse the application. There is no obligation at this present stage for the Mayor to indicate his intentions regarding a possible direction, and no such decision should be inferred from the Mayor's statement and comments.

Financial considerations

23 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

24 The key strategic planning issue which is assessed in this short report is the acceptability of the proposed redevelopment of the sports ground on Green Belt. Other planning issues including transport concerns TfL may have can be dealt with the Council. The proposed redevelopment complies with the London Plan as set out below:

- **Principle of land use/ redevelopment of football facility on Green Belt:** The proposed redevelopment of the sports ground on Green Belt is supported as it complies with policy 3.19 of the London Plan. Very special circumstances have been demonstrated justifying the inappropriate element of the redevelopment. This assessment is consistent with other similar proposals the Mayor has supported previously (Crystal Palace FC, QPR and Tottenham Hotspur FC).
- **Visual impact:** The visual impact of the redevelopment is considered minimal.

25 The Mayor does not need to be consulted again on this application.

For further information, contact GLA Planning Unit (Development & Projects Team):

Colin Wilson, Senior Manager (Development & Projects)

020 7983 4783 email colin.wilson@london.gov.uk

Justin Carr, Strategic Planning Manager (Development & Projects)

020 7983 4895 email justin.carr@london.gov.uk

Tefera Tibebe, Case Officer

020 7983 4312 email tefera.tibebe@london.gov.uk
