Kings College School Sports Ground, New Malden
in the London Borough of Merton
planning application no.07/P3849

Strategic planning application stage 1 referral (old powers)

The proposal
Demolition of the existing pavilion building and the construction of a new pavilion with all-weather sports pitch and floodlit.

The applicant
The applicant is Kings College School, and the architect is NVB Architects.

Strategic issues
The proposal is acceptable in terms of Metropolitan Open Land policy. A revised energy strategy needs to be submitted. Further work is required in the production of a travel plan. This plan, and employment and training for local people, need to be secured through an appropriate planning agreement.

Recommendation
That Merton Council be advised that the proposed development is acceptable in principle, but outstanding strategic concerns need to be addressed before the application is referred back to the Mayor.

Context
1 On 10 January 2008 Merton Council consulted the Mayor of London on a proposal to develop the above site for the above uses. Under the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 the Mayor has the same opportunity as other statutory consultees to comment on the proposal. This report sets out information for the Mayor’s use in deciding what comments to make.

2 The application is referable under Category 3D of the Schedule to the Order: “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 floor space of more than 1000 square metres or a material change in the use of such building.”
3 If Merton Council subsequently decides that it is minded to grant planning permission, it must first allow the Mayor an opportunity to decide whether to direct the Council to refuse permission.

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

**Site description**

5 The site is bounded by the rear of houses in Tennyson Avenue to the north-west, Pyl Brook to the north-east, an off-site private access road to the south, and Arthur Road to the south-west. Vehicular access to the site is via Kingsway to the northern corner of the site. The nearest station of the Transport for London Road Network is the A3 Beverley Way, approximately 1.2 kilometres north-west of the site. The nearest Strategic Road Network is the A298 Bushey Road approximately 1 kilometre to the north. The site has a public transport accessibility level of 2 on a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 is most accessible. Motspur Park rail station is within 800 metres of the site. Bus routes K5 and 163 run within walking distance of the site. Several local cycle routes and quieter roads recommended for cyclists run near the site.

![Fig 1.1 The application site (Source: applicant’s design and access statement)](image)

6 The sports ground as shown in Fig 1.1 above comprises an area of approximately 6.4 hectares, divided into three separate fields. The larger, northern half comprises an artificial playing surface, a cricket square, six winter sports pitches and a training grid. The southern half accommodates three winter sports pitches. The pitches are currently used by the School as well as by external clubs including Fulham FC.

7 The site is bounded to the north-west by an established 2 and 3-storey residential area, to the south by a cemetery and to the north-east by a school building. Significant trees are located along all boundaries of the site.
Details of the proposal

8 The application is for the demolition of the existing pavilion building, which has a floorspace of 451sq.m. and the construction of a new, relocated part 1, part 2-storey sports pavilion with a height of 6.4 metres and a floorspace of 1200 sq.m. It includes the construction of new changing facilities, storage and educational space. The proposal incorporates the provision of an additional floodlit all-weather sports pitch and improvements to existing natural turf pitches with an enlarged car parking area and cycle parking.

Case history

9 There is no relevant history in the context of the proposed scheme.

Strategic planning issues and relevant policies and guidance

10 The relevant issues and corresponding policies are as follows:

- MOL London Plan; PPG2
- Biodiversity London Plan; the Mayor’s Biodiversity Strategy; PPS9
- Urban design London Plan; PPS1
- Access London Plan; PPS1; Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment SPG; Planning and Access for Disabled People: a good practice guide (ODPM)
- Sustainable development/energy London Plan; PPS1, PPS3; PPG13; PPS22; PPS Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1; the Mayor’s Energy Strategy; Sustainable Design and Construction SPG
- Flooding London Plan; Mayor’s draft Water Strategy; PPS25, RPG3B
- Transport London Plan; the Mayor’s Transport Strategy; PPS13; Land for Transport Functions SPG
- Parking London Plan; the Mayor’s Transport Strategy; PPS13

11 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan in force for the area is the 2003 Merton Unitary Development Plan and the 2004 London Plan (consolidated with amendments since 2004).

MOL and playing fields

12 The most significant aspect of this development relates to its impacts on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). Chapter 3 of the London Plan is concerned with, amongst other things, open space. Policy 3D.8 (Realising the value of open space and Green Infrastructure) states that “The Mayor will work with strategic partners to protect and promote London’s network of open spaces, to realise the current and potential value of open space to communities and to protect the many benefits of open space…” In addition, London Plan policy 3D.10 (Metropolitan Open Land) also applies: “The Mayor will and boroughs should maintain the protection of Metropolitan Open Land from inappropriate development.”

13 The reference to “inappropriate development” flows directly from PPG2, which sets out the Government’s policy towards Green Belts, but which equally, applies to the protection of MOL. This policy is one of the most robust and enduring in the planning system. The London Plan states that the protection of London’s MOL should be maintained and points out that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development on MOL, and that MOL should be given the same
level of protection as the Green Belt. Policy 3D.10 states that “Essential facilities for appropriate uses will only be acceptable where they do not have an adverse impact on the openness of MOL.”

14 PPG2 identifies the purposes of Green Belt, which are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns from merging; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict land. Government guidance states that development is inappropriate unless it is for the following purposes:

- Agriculture and forestry.
- Essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation; for cemeteries; and for other uses of land, which preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
- Limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings.
- Limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites identified in adopted development plans, which meet the criteria in Annex C of PPG2.

Developments such as the proposed one can be considered to be an essential facility for outdoor sport and recreation and PPG2 makes it clear that “Possible examples of such facilities include small changing rooms or unobtrusive spectator accommodation for outdoor sport.” (Para 3.5).

15 The proposed redevelopment of the sports ground is in accordance with the use of the MOL for sport and recreation. The proposed development is therefore appropriate in the context of PPG2.

**Biodiversity**

16 The application site is adjacent to a Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation – The Lower Pyl Brook, as identified through the adopted procedures for London. The applicant has submitted a report on the impact of the proposals on bat activity in the area, bats being a protected species under both European and UK legislation.

17 The report finds that low numbers of bats use the area for foraging, mainly associated with the Pyl Brook corridor on the periphery of the application site. The proposals could impact on the behaviour of these bats through the introduction of additional floodlighting.

18 The report recommends a list of mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood of any impact on bats occurring. These involve various habitat enhancements and creation, including tree planting, to reinforce a buffer effect along the application site/Pyl Brook interface. Regarding the floodlighting specification, a standard set of recommendations is included to reduce the risk of light pollution through spillage.

**Urban design**

19 The site selected for the proposed pavilion makes use of existing vehicular access through Kingsway and is outside the most sensitive flood plain area. The building is orientated to present a smaller (single storey) elevation to the neighbouring residential area to the north-west of the site.

20 The closest existing residential buildings are located approximately 48 metres from the single storey portion of the proposed pavilion development, and approximately 68 metres from the 2-storey section of the proposed pavilion.
21 The location of a 120-space car park adjacent to Pyl Brook and to the north-east of the proposed pavilion allows convenient public and service vehicle access to the site and an uncluttered boundary to be provided along the Pyl Brook.

22 The pavilion building is orientated to align with the adjacent football pitch. A viewing balcony at first floor level looks towards the principal football pitch in the north-west corner of the site. The orientation of the building has been set so that the narrow gable end elevation faces the existing residential properties on Tennyson Avenue. This minimises the visual impact on the MOL. This part of the building is also a single storey height (as shown in fig 1.2 below) and therefore fully reduces the visual mass of the new facilities.

23 The all-weather pitch and principal football pitch are located to the north corner of the site. Other pitches have been set out to maximise the use of the site allowing for the retention of a pumping station in the centre of the southern portion of the site, and the position of the 700 sq.m. flood compensation area in the south-west corner of the site.

Access

24 There are two approaches to the site, the principal approach through Kingsway and a minor approach via Arthur Road. The latter is too narrow to enable coaches and larger vehicles to gain access, and the school has no ownership of adjoining land to enable the access to be improved. It is therefore proposed that the principal access remains via Kingsway. This brings all participants and visitors to the site at the lowest point quite close to the position where the Pyl Brook becomes culverted.

25 The southern boundary of the site is outside the main flood plain but access would involve a new road across the whole of the playing fields. It is suggested that the extension of the urban realm into the site is not desirable, and from a management and safety point of view the school requires that vehicles should be prevented from going too far into the site. The two cottages adjacent to Kingsway are owned by the school and provide accommodation for the groundsmen. This provides security to the site and enables easy management of the facilities. It is therefore proposed to retain the access and car park arrangements in the northern corner of the site.
Energy

26 The London Plan climate change policies as set out in chapter 4A collectively require developments to make the fullest contribution to tackling climate change by minimising carbon dioxide emissions, adopting sustainable design and construction measures, prioritising decentralised energy supply, and incorporating renewable energy technologies with a target of 20% carbon reductions from on-site renewable energy. The policies set out ways in which developers must address mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change.

27 Policies 4A.2 to 4A.8 of the London Plan focus on how to mitigate climate change, and the carbon dioxide reduction targets that are necessary across London to achieve this.

28 The applicant needs to use simplified building energy method (SBEM) or other Building Regulations approved software to establish the carbon dioxide emissions of the proposed development/building for minimum building regulations compliance, i.e. the target emissions rate (TER). The energy usages not covered under Building Regulations (small power, equipment) should be added to create the baseline emissions.

29 Carbon dioxide emissions should include the electricity used by the floodlighting. A description of the energy efficient features of the floodlight system to be used should be included in the strategy.

30 The software used (as indicated above) should be also used to assess the carbon dioxide savings that the proposed demand reduction measures achieve. The result of the modelling should demonstrate that the proposed energy efficient design measures are enough to reduce carbon dioxide emissions below the minimum requirements of 2006 Building Regulations.

31 The energy strategy indicates that the renewable option falls short of the 20% carbon dioxide reduction target. A combination of solar thermal and wind turbines has been chosen as the renewable solution providing 11% carbon dioxide savings.

32 The wind energy option suggests the installation of three small 2.5 KW wind turbines due to the fact that these will have less visual impact than a bigger unit.

33 Both solar thermal and wind energy system should be (overall) sized to allow for carbon dioxide of savings 20% (including as indicated above, the electricity that is expected to be used in the flood lighting).

34 The wind energy option should be supplemented with drawings showing the proposed wind turbine locations regarding the proposed building and within the site as a whole. The solar option should be supplemented with basic indicative drawings of the roof area available related to the suggested collector area, given that building design stage allows for it.

35 Initial contacts with the relevant parties should, at this stage, give an indication on how viable/feasible would be to install a wind turbine in this location from a planning permission point of view.

36 In summary, it is suggested that a revised energy strategy needs to be submitted addressing the comments made above.

Flooding

37 PPS25 classifies the proposed uses as water compatible. A flood risk appraisal is not submitted, but it is clear from correspondence that the applicant has had a series of discussions
and revisions in order to address more detailed flood risk issues. Therefore there is no objection in principle to the proposals but the detailed flood risk issues need to be resolved with the Environment Agency.

38 Surface water storage tanks and permeable pavements have been proposed. The water in the storage tanks is proposed to be used for irrigation within the development. These aspects are in line with London Plan policy 4C.14.

Transport for London’s comments

39 The application proposes 98 car parking spaces, an increase of 38 over the existing 60 spaces. Although there are no parking standards for sports centres, London Plan policy requires a restraint-based approach to car parking. TfL considers this level of additional parking to be an over-provision given the existing level of overflow parking and the ratio of cars to visitors demonstrated in the parking surveys provided. TfL therefore recommends that the car parking be reduced to fewer than 92 car parking spaces.

40 The provision of two coach parking spaces is welcomed, although it is noted that this represents a loss of two coach spaces from the existing situation. In addition, the transport assessment notes that three coaches could be on site during peak periods. TfL suggests that an additional coach parking space could be created from the over-provided car parking spaces.

41 Twenty cycle parking spaces are proposed, which is in line with TfL’s cycle parking standards. These spaces should be covered and located in an area with easy access and natural surveillance. The cycle parking should be secured as part of any planning agreement.

42 TfL welcomes the provision of a draft travel plan for the site. However, significant further work is necessary before the travel plan can be considered acceptable. It should address objectives and targets, marketing, measures, and arrangements for management and monitoring. TfL expects the travel plan to be secured, enforced, monitored and reviewed as part of the Section 106 agreement.

London Development Agency’s comments

43 Initiatives to create training and employment opportunities for local people during construction and subsequently should be formalised through a section 106 agreement between the local borough and the applicant where possible as well as the need to address other barriers to employment (e.g. child care). Similarly the applicant should also secure the use of local businesses during construction, as well as, in the procurement of services and supplies from small and medium size enterprises or micro businesses.

44 Subject to the resolution of other issues raised in this report the LDA supports this application in principle.

Sport England’s comments

45 Sport England considers that the proposal should serve to improve the management and the sports activities. Therefore, Sport England wishes to support the application for the following reasons:

- The new pavilion will provide changing facilities of a high standard that will support wider use of the sports pitches on the site. It is highly important that the pavilion be adapted and improved to facilitate increased participation in sport for women.
• The new pavilion will assist in safeguarding the use of the playing fields for sporting purposes for the foreseeable future as a time when playing pitches in the south-west of London are under pressure for development.

• The pavilion and new all-weather pitch will allow for improved opportunities for sports development at the school and for other current users of the site.

• The provision of a new pavilion building will serve to create a vital link between an elite club and community sports in Merton.

• An additional floodlit pitch will allow for extended evening use in the winter and this is essential for there to be any practical use of the site outside of normal school hours.

Local planning authority’s position

46 Merton Council officers have yet to confirm their position.

Legal considerations

47 Under the arrangements set out in article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 the Mayor has an opportunity to make representations to Merton Council at this stage. If the Council subsequently resolves to grant planning permission, it must allow the Mayor an opportunity to decide whether to direct it to refuse planning permission. 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 comments unless specifically stated.

Financial considerations

48 There are no financial considerations at this stage.

Conclusion

49 The principle of the development is acceptable in strategic planning terms. However, outstanding concerns regarding energy and transport as detailed in the report above need to be addressed satisfactorily.