

Boddingtons Planning

Part change of use of the pavilion to provide use for gym and physiotherapy

Reading Cricket and Hockey Club

**Sonning Lane
Sonning
Reading
RG4 6ST**

April 2026

Background

Reading CHC is one of the most successful clubs in the country. They field four cricket teams and 21 hockey teams and include over 600 junior members of their hockey section and draw from nearly 100 local schools. The Hockey Clubs first men's and women's teams play in the national premier league and the ladies are the current national champions. They have produced numerous internationals and Olympians over the years.

The Club occupies a large triangular site (over 20 acres) off Sonning Lane to the west, the A4 to the Southeast and Berkshire County Sports Club on the other and to the northern. It has its own entrance with a right-hand turn lane, a large car park of over 130 cars and a pavilion of around 1300m² (14000 ft²). There is a flat to one end and large garage housing the groundsman's equipment. Close to the car park is the main artificial hockey pitch. A second pitch is owned and run by RCHC on the grounds of Berks Sports Club.

The cricket squares are the east of the pavilion on the large, grassed areas.

The Club is totally reliant on its membership for its funding, both sports are totally amateur, although some other clubs offer incentives to some of the better players, RCHC has remained amateur and expect even the top players to pay a subscription. All officers are voluntary and unpaid.

The Club used to be hired out for wedding etc to provide some external income but there is a glut of other venues better set up for catering than is the Club, so this has diminished. There are no grants available to provide funding.

The success of the Club particularly in Hockey over the past few years is also an expensive business with the Ladies recently playing the European Cup at a cost of around £40000 that has to be funded by the Club, it is not cheap to represent the Country. The hockey section has recently had to renew its aging Floodlights and artificial pitch at a cost of around £250,000. There is the second pitch that also needs attention and is likely to cost a similar amount.

The Committee works hard to make the Club viable and to ensure the future of the Club which has become harder over the last few years due to the sole form of income and the increasing cost of facilities to maintain the top level required. They have begun work on a masterplan for the future of the Club for the next 20 years to identify the ways that they can increase income and decrease outgoings.

The Masterplan

The Pavilion is the obvious starting point. The building at 1300m² is extremely large and was designed in the old days when Hockey was played on grass and all teams played at the same time and then were all in for teas and the bar at the same time. There were formerly 7 grass hockey pitches on this site, and the land and buildings were designed suitable for the circumstances at that time, which have changed considerably since. Now there are only two home teams playing hockey at any one time

In addition, there have been fundamental changes to the nature of the use of the pavilion. Obviously less people in the bar spending less due to the drink drive laws. So less space is needed for the club for these activities.

Due to a number of circumstances but including safeguarding and other delicate issues, many people do not change at the club or even shower there. They come changed and ready to play go home unchanged. Clothes are not left on the Changing rooms but are packed up and taken back to cars or carried to the pitch. We have 8 changing rooms on the ground floor of the pavilion (2 women's and 6 men's) and consider that we can manage with less. We have a large shower block which is effectively redundant and a large men's toilet block that can be reduced and repurposed.

The flat is larger than required and the needs have changed. Formerly it was used for the groundsman and then the steward and their families. It is used now to accommodate players who combine playing with the other duties, coaching and security.

The groundsman's hut is barely used due to services being bought in rather than carried out by a paid groundsman or club members. Equally it cannot take some of the larger equipment.

The Club needs to be aware that the pitch in the Berkshire Sport Club land can be bought by that Club who own the land and we will need to have that in mind. The Club approx. 10 years ago had planning permission for two new artificial pitches where the main cricket pitch is, but this was not implemented. We have surveyed the land and worked out that it is possible to move the cricket squares and

accommodate a new artificial pitch on the land. Only two pitches are required both for cricket and hockey and all can be accommodated on the same site.

We attach the plan showing some of the thoughts that will need to be accommodated or altered over the next few years to bring the club forward with certainty and more efficiency.

The proposals

There are a number of elements in the proposals comprising a reorganisation and consolidation of the clubs' facilities leaving the Club with manageable areas for its own use and the utilisation of areas for others. There is no new build elements in these proposals

They are:

1. Conversion of men's changing rooms to physiotherapists practice. This involves internal alterations of subdivision of some rooms to provide reception and treatment rooms, including a new access from outside.
2. Conversion of the flat into 2 small changing rooms. This will allow changing when senior teams are playing and will occupy the changing room during half time when it will not be possible to use the main rooms. Games will still be going on the second pitch.
3. Conversion of the old bar area to gym.
4. Conversion of the shower block to treatment rooms. Showers will still be available in each of the changing rooms. The current physio room is retained as a treatment room
5. The Club retains the main lounge area and toilets at first floor for its own use as shown green on the plans
6. Internal alterations to the ladies toilets to provide separate blocks and including new external accesses. This improves the current access and fire safety.
7. External alterations are minimal. The changing rooms windows will be changed from high level to conventional windows, two new doors in the SE elevations to the ladies changing and a new door to the NW Elevation and changing of the high level windows to conventional windows.
8. Conversion of the garage to a new 2 bed flat as replacement of previous including removal of roller shutter doors and insertion of windows and door.

The effect on the Club from these changes is considerable, in that it will bring in a steady rental to help to support the club for the future, the keep the fabric of the building in good shape and the bring benefits to the members from the services provided at a discounted rate. The users are sports related and are aligned with the

strength conditioning and rehabilitation that the athletes at the Club need to improve and recover. Over the site as a whole there will be better use of the facilities rather than a couple of days a week which is more sustainable. The locations is sustainable with a strong local residential base locally

Planning History

None relevant to these proposals

F2008/1801 Construction of two hockey pitches and associated earthworks floodlighting and fencing Granted April 2009

Planning Policy

CP3 - General Principles for development

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.
- d) Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;
- e) Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;
- f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;
- g) Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;
- h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;
- i) Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land; and
- j) Do not lead to a loss of community or recreational facilities/land or infrastructure unless suitable alternative provision is available.

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and streetscenes and where required Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes.

Issues

Effects of increased activity on the area

Over a year the Club is in general very quiet and generates little activity. That is the problem. It is then interspersed by high levels of activity. In the summer months

cricket is played at the weekend with some evening midweek. There are two pitches with say 50 people involved two teams scorers and umpires. At all other times there is nothing happening at the Club.

In winter it is not so different. Midweek training happens a couple of evenings a week for some teams. All the activity is at the weekends. There are 6 games on Saturday starting at 10 m and going to last games at around 6pm. Teams will come and go as only two home, and two away teams plays at a time again around 50-60 players and umpires. Sometimes when the first teams are playing members will stay at the Club to watch. There are few spectators who will come specifically to watch the game other than some parents etc. But the Club is 'busy'. At all other times there is no one there. The pitches sometimes get used by school during the day but that is sporadic and, in the evenings, if there is no hockey, one of the pitches may be hired out.

The gym may have twenty people at any one time. The physio has 6 treatment rooms so will be 6 patients and 6 coming for the next appointment. Maybe 30-35 additional people using the site, when operating to capacity. On such a large site that number will hardly be noticed when compared to the busy times. The activity is indoors for both users and there will be no noise etc associated with the operation. Effects on the Operation of the Club. The Club will be better used having activity during working hours and will discourage some of the unsocial activity that the Club has experienced over the years

Parking and traffic

On the basis of the figures above there will be a modest increase in traffic. The level of traffic for the most part, weekdays and evenings especially will have no issue with parking and will be able to park where they will. The only impact may be at the weekends in the winter season (September to April) especially when a senior side is playing (Saturday afternoon) or when juniors are training (Sunday mornings), and it will be a matter for the users what their hours of operation are and whether there will be a clash. Working on the worst-case basis that both will be open about 20 extra cars will be likely to be generated, assuming that most people arrive by car. There are well over 130 spaces and then 20 acres of land to be available as overspill. Parking over the summer out of hockey season will not be an issue at any time especially as the cricketers tend to park on the grass close the pitches. There is a gate at the bottom of the car park that extends to the field and has an area of gravel reinforced land will be able to be used if required, which can be seen on the plan. This currently takes place when there are matches that fill the car park.

The Club undertook some traffic counting over the past months at their busiest times. Those numbers are shown below.

Sat/Sun 4 th /5 th October	Saturday 1300	Saturday 1600	Sunday 0900	Sunday 1330pm
Car parks	90	75	160	80

Sat 25th October 1430 Total 132

Sat 17th February 1130 Total – 69 1400 Total - 92

Sunday 18th February 1130 Total 92

It shows that most of the time there is space in the car park sufficient to absorb new parking numbers generated by this proposal. The 'full' days number perhaps 30 per year, when the overflow parking is used and are always at the weekend. Sonning Lane outside is double yellows no parking restricted along its length outside the Hockey Club, so grassed areas are made available at these times.



Conclusion

The proposals are sport centric and have synergy with the use of the Reading Cricket and Hockey Club. There is no new build elements, and the space is found as being surplus to the requirements of the Club as being outdated or defunct due to the change in the playing conditions and the move especially if hockey from grass to artificial grass.

The Club has to consider its future and to plan forward to be able to stay in the building and its surrounding pitches and parking for the future by making best use of its building. The changes are internal but not structural and comprise only minor external changes such as the change of some windows and doors added but nothing that detracts from the appearance or character of the building or its overall function.

The proposed uses are internal uses and will not give rise to any external disturbance or activity different to that already occurring.

The uses will add little traffic and will not conflict with the parking on the site. The Club already has overflow areas shown on the plans that will be available in the even

that the car parks are full. For the great majority of the time (90%) the car parks will be vacant clients will park close to the pavilion.

The proposals accord with Policy to make effective sustainable use of buildings and will sustain the existing recreational facilities on site.