

DOLPHIN SCHOOL

DESIGN AND ACCESS / PLANNING STATEMENT

THE RETENTION OF 4NO. FLOODLIGHTS, 6NO. AMENITY LIGHTS AND ARTIFICIAL TURF PLAYING SURFACE, ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXISTING MULTI-USE GAMES AREA (RETROSPECTIVE)

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The multi-use games area (MUGA) at Dolphin School has had amenity lights/CCTV in place for decades, to facilitate safe teaching of sports and educational activities, appropriate to the school premises use. The lights have only been used during site operation hours with timers ensuring no use after 8pm.

In 2022, Dolphin School instructed Notts Sport Ltd to propose replacement options that would improve the safety and consistency of lighting on the MUGA and reduce its energy use, along with a change of playing surface to better suit the sports curriculum. Later that year, four floodlights and an artificial turf surface were installed by an appointed contractor. These lights were in operation from installation date until February 2025.

In February 2025, Wokingham Borough Council, or rather Planning Officer Development Management & Compliance, contacted Dolphin School in relation to a planning enforcement case. The case pertained to the floodlights which were installed at the site without planning permission.

In April 2025, Notts Sport were appointed by Dolphin School to develop a full planning application for the retention of the floodlights and artificial turf associated with the existing multi-use games area (MUGA). The full planning application was submitted in June 2025 and later validated in July 2025.

In August 2025, Notts Sport and Dolphin School were notified that the case exceeded the four floodlights. It was deemed that the wider amenity lights/CCTV also needed to form part of the application. Following consultation with the planning officer, the full planning application was ultimately withdrawn.

Notts Sport and Dolphin School have since liaised with Halliday Lighting, who designed the floodlights, to survey the cumulative light spill/pollution from both the floodlights and amenity lights, which support the MUGA and safe access in its vicinity. This statement forms part of the new planning application to satisfy the refined scope of the case.

1.2 Document Schedule

The following table lists all supporting documents at the time of producing this statement:

Document Type	Author	Document No	Document Title/Description
Planning Application Form	Notts Sport Ltd	-	-
Plans/Drawings	Notts Sport Ltd	NSDSL001D	Location Plan
	Notts Sport Ltd	NSDSL002D	Existing Site Plan
	Notts Sport Ltd	NSDSL003C	MUGA Elevations
	Halliday Lighting	HLS4244	Overspill report
	Halliday Lighting	-	Column Detail
	Siteco	-	FL11 Data Sheet

1.3 Statement Purpose and Structure

This statement addresses design and access issues in relation to the proposals; use, amount, layout, appearance, scale, landscaping, and access. The remaining statement structure is as follows:

- **Section 2** – Describes the site, its surroundings, and any pertinent local permissions;
- **Section 3** – Details the proposed materials and associated access considerations;
- **Section 4** – Lists the material considerations based on the scale and type of development; and
- **Section 5** – Provides a statement summary and sets out the conclusions.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 Site Description

The subject site is Dolphin School due North of Hurst, serving the educational needs of the community from the ages of 3 to 13. In addition to the educational buildings, the site boasts moderate playing fields and a multi-use games area (MUGA) with associated artificial turf, mesh fencing, lighting and CCTV surveillance. The site itself is secured by a combination of dense vegetation and mesh fencing.

'Dolphin School was founded in 1970 by Dr Ophelia Follett, an educational visionary. The ethos was simple: Dolphin School was a place for children to be happy, independent and experience a very broad and stimulating education.'

The school began as a Montessori nursery, initially opening its doors to 25 children. The numbers attending the school gradually increased, and now several thousand children have passed through the school gates, benefiting from the unique educational experience on offer.

Today, the founding principles continue to guide and shape our work. 'Freedom to Learn' is the central tenet and Dolphin School's unique cross-curricular field trip and pioneering walking trip programmes, remain staples of an education that has been copied and widely embraced throughout England.'

Dolphin School (2025) *History of Dolphin*. Available at: <https://www.dolphinschool.com/580/history-of-dolphin> [Accessed: 19/05/25].

2.2 Planning History

Listed below are examples of applications which received planning permission at the subject site:

Reference	Decision	Development Description
241495	Permitted 23/07/2024	Full application for proposed demolition of the existing single storey classroom building
241318	Permitted 08/07/2024	Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey classroom building
210805	Permitted 10/06/2021	Full application for the proposed erection of a two storey building to create additional classrooms, toilets and library facilities, with associated roof terrace.
212191	Permitted 12/08/2021	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 210805 dated 10/06/2021. Condition 5 relates to Protection of Trees, and Condition 6 relates to Landscape and Trees Management Plan.

2.3 Similar Applications

Listed below are examples of similar applications which received planning permission in the local area:

Reference	Decision	Development Description
223372	Permitted 13/01/2023	Full application for the proposed erection of an additional tennis court with fencing, new floodlights system to block of 3 courts & rebound fences to single court and erection of bund.
130103	Permitted 31/01/2014	Proposed construction of a 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) with perimeter fencing, spectator area, macadam path, storage container and floodlights.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Description

The retrospective development includes an artificial turf surface, 4 floodlight columns with light units atop, and 6 hollow box-section posts with amenity lights (2 of which also have CCTV cameras fitted).

3.2 Purpose and Use

The MUGA has benefitted the pupils and local community since its installation pre-2000. The addition of 9 amenity lights and 2 CCTV cameras have enhanced its functionality and safe access for decades. In 2022, the school identified an opportunity to improve the MUGA by installing an artificial turf playing surface and a floodlight system. The floodlights were designed to meet salient standards/guidance notes for tennis and netball, and the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) obtrusive light guidance.

Both the amenity lights and floodlights have operated between the hours of 08:00-20:00 on weekdays and 09:00-17:00 on weekends, where daylight cannot facilitate safe play and access. This application seeks to formalise these hours of operation, with a slight increase on weekdays to meet the growing demand for the facility: 08:00-20:30 on weekdays, and 09:00-17:00 on weekends.

Since the floodlight installation, several amenity lights have become redundant. Thus, this retrospective application seeks to retain 6 amenity lights and 2 CCTV cameras – those remaining shall be removed.

3.3 Layout



Figure 1. Aerial site image with the development outlined in red and the site owned boundary in blue

The development footprint is situated central to the site. A lighting plan was originally prepared to establish site constraints and develop a robust solution of the floodlights. The supporting site plan reference NSDS002C illustrates the artificial turf and various lights/CCTV cameras to be retained.

3.4 Amount

The artificial turf installed over the former hard standing surface measures 36.5m x 36.5m approx. The four floodlight columns are relatively slender, 0.3m in diameter across their widest section (base). The hollow box-section posts which support the amenity lights/CCTV cameras have matching profiles to those which support the mesh fencing around the MUGA, 0.1m in diameter approx.

Accordingly, the land occupied by the lights is negligible compared to that of the MUGA footprint.

3.5 Scale

Artificial lighting is typically recommended on outdoor sports facilities to support safe use over evenings and winter months where daylight hours otherwise restrict use – thereby maximising the benefits to its users through more consistent play. Lighting columns should also be galvanized to prevent corrosion.

The installed floodlight columns were all galvanized as standard, measuring 10.0m in height with a mid-hinge feature to allow for improved maintenance. The hollow box-section posts, which support the amenity lights/CCTV cameras, measure 6.00m in height with a galvanized and powder coat finish.

3.6 Landscaping

Given the nature of the proposals, no landscape features or reinstatement works were necessary.

3.7 Appearance

The proposals were designed to reduce their visual impacts when viewed from beyond the site, and to consider the existing site character. It should be noted that the MUGA is generally screened somewhat from onlookers due to the great trees and vegetation which surround the site.

The artificial turf is green in colour to resemble natural grass. The floodlights have a galvanized finish as standard, providing a neutral (grey/silver) appearance. The hollow box-section posts supporting the amenity lights/CCTV are powder coated black.

3.8 Pedestrian and Vehicular Access

Pedestrian and vehicular access is provided via the main site entrance off Waltham Rd/B3018.

3.9 Inclusive Access

Inclusivity was carefully considered throughout the design process and applied wherever possible. The intention was to provide a smooth transition to/from the development area, for people of all ages and abilities. It was deemed that the floodlight system would enhance the function of the existing MUGA to benefit the pupils and the local community, without compromising any existing means of access. The retention of key amenity lights/CCTV cameras will provide safe access around the facility.

4. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Key Material Considerations

Based on a review of planning policies, relevant in the determination of the subject application, we find that the key material considerations are the principle of development, light, and heritage/character.

4.2 Principle of Development

The MUGA has long served for sports and recreational purposes. The change in surface type and the installation of lighting, be it the amenity lights/CCTV or floodlights, have enhanced the use of the sports facility. This planning application recognises the existing land use and the subsequent developments which have enhanced it; the principle of the development is therefore deemed to be appropriate.

4.3 Light

Specialist lighting engineers, Halliday Lighting, originally designed the floodlights to meet requirements set out by the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for tennis and netball, whilst also avoiding any adverse impacts beyond the MUGA footprint. In October 2025, Halliday Lighting surveyed both the floodlights and amenity lights in operation, to record their directed performance and wider spill/pollution.

The supporting lighting documents demonstrate the level of control that the floodlights and amenity lights boast, concluding that the recorded spill from these lights was in fact better than that estimated in earlier calculations for the floodlights alone. We understand that this is largely due the drivers for the LED head units which greatly reduces rear-spill. Note that the lighting report does not factor in the amenity lights that are to be removed, only those that are to be retained alongside the floodlights.

Accordingly, both the floodlights and amenity lights to be retained are considered appropriate in scale and design with no adverse impacts anticipated from their operation, when used in line with the earlier schedule of use.

4.4 Heritage and Character

The scale and appearance of the floodlights were designed to minimize visual impacts and light pollution to the local character and heritage assets. Within 100m of the development footprint there are indeed Listed assets, namely Hinton House and an associated wall due Northeast.

All lighting columns are slender in profile, with existing trees and vegetation around the site screening them somewhat from such assets. Based on the supporting lighting documents, the lights will have no material impact on these assets as the illuminance levels greatly reduce beyond the MUGA footprint.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Applicant Statement

'In addition to providing students with a first-class outdoor learning environment, Dolphin School want to be at the very heart of the community with great sporting facilities that provide both students and the community with access to a wide range of activities.

The school has active links with several local clubs and organisations at present, specifically Hurst Football Club and the Twyford Comets whom we are sponsoring this season. Retaining the artificial turf surface, floodlights, CCTV cameras and certain amenity lights, is key to meeting our curriculum needs and community engagement.'

5.2 Statement Summary and Conclusions

Based on a review of relevant planning policy and the physical context of the site, it is considered that the development is appropriate for the following reasons:

- **Planning Policy** – The development accords with policies at national and local levels, supporting the enhancement of sports & recreation facilities of this kind;
- **Good Design** – The supporting documents demonstrate that the development does not adversely impact existing amenities, whilst also meeting the lighting requirements for the identified sports;
- **Sustainability** – The LED luminaires are more energy efficient than alternative technologies and the mid-hinged columns allow for routine maintenance, maintaining their efficiency.

With regards to the information contained in the supporting documents and herein, it is considered that the development is fundamentally sound in principle and representative of an appropriate and policy compliant scheme which sought to improve the sports provisions at Dolphin School.

Jason Palmer, Design and Planning Manager

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