

Planning Reference: 261695 – Luckley House School, Luckley Road, Wokingham
RG40 3EU: Proposed Sports Pitches and Associated External Works

Submitted by: Ellen Crewe

I reside at 14 Hart Dyke Close and am a member of the HDC ACE group. Having undertaken intensive analysis of the Luckley House proposal and in August, having met with the current school bursar, I have outlined below the reasons for my objection.

- The site is currently unspoiled undeveloped countryside. There is increasingly precious little countryside surrounding us and I believe it's worth protecting it. As a member of the Campaign to Protect Rural England Berkshire (CPRE) it's only too apparent that the pressure on our countryside is ever increasing. The countryside doesn't just belong to us; it belongs to our children and grandchildren.
- Wokingham is a distinct town, and this is recognisable from the belts of land that remain between developments. Encroachment of these green spaces leads to sprawling urbanisation and a merging of discrete areas that each have their own characteristics and identity. "Once it is gone, it's gone forever".
- Between 2017 and 2019 our family were involved in the campaign to Save Woodcraze Countryside. It was a long costly battle, especially for Wokingham Borough Council, but we were finally delighted that the Planning Inspector PA 170261 and Appeal PA190286 ruled that the development should not proceed. He commented specifically about the playing field that was planned for Luckley House giving it little weight as a community asset. He deemed this because the school is private and the facility would only be of benefit to a relatively limited number of people.

We embarked upon home renovation, installing costly glazing, after the inspector's decision, as we felt confident, at least for the reasonably foreseeable future, that the countryside would remain. Sadly, we have realised that this is not the case. My husband and I are retired, and we find ourselves once again campaigning to protect the countryside and recognise the value of green spaces.

We consider this development even worse than the previous proposal due to the proximity of the playing fields to our boundary and the mitigation proposed. The

proposal states that the rear gardens on Hart Dyke Close allow separation however this just isn't true. Our home runs adjacent to the site (see photo).



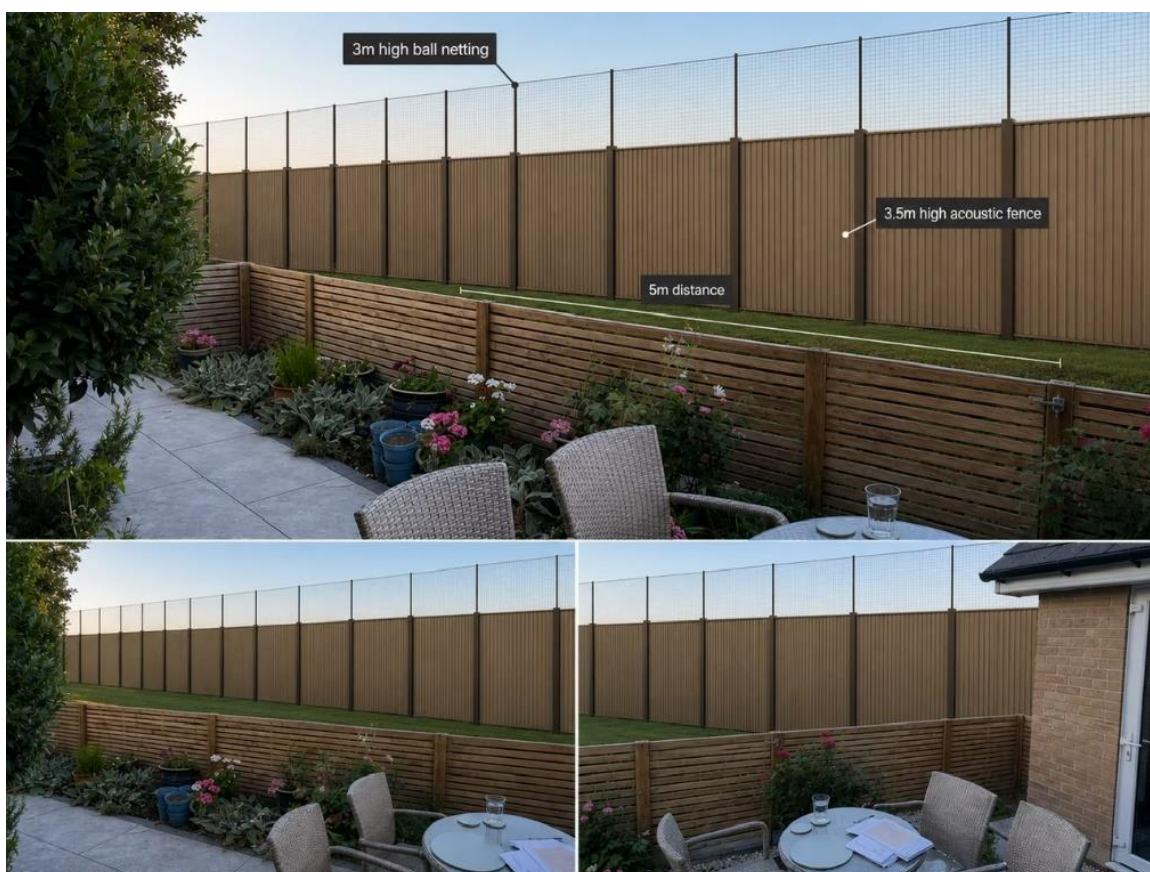
1. Our TV/Snug room (to the left of the image) is less than 1m from our boundary, placing it less than 7m away from the proposed acoustic fence.
2. Our dining area (with the tall feature window) and study (the two ground floor windows to the right) are only 2.5m further back from this.
3. We have two bedrooms upstairs with multiple windows overlooking the site. These bedrooms are sited 6.5m from our boundary fence.
 - a. Our youngest daughter is an emergency worker and her contract relies on her to work shift patterns as required. Her bedroom has two windows overlooking the site (to the right of the image).
 - b. We have just been blessed with a baby grandson, and we will be providing childcare for our daughter when she returns to work as a midwife. The nursery window also directly overlooks the site (the larger upper window).

- From studying the plan the only conclusion we can draw from the proposal is that the site is completely unsuitable for this development as there is inadequate separation from our property.
- The inadequate separation results in an unacceptable impact on our residential amenity in the following areas;
 1. Loss of privacy and overlooking. Players on the pitch and spectators will be able to look directly into our bedroom windows. There is also the 'no mans land' strip that runs between the acoustic fence and our boundary fence (which is only 1m high). There are likely to be further privacy and security issues as it isn't clear from the proposal how this area of the land is to be accessed and secured.
 2. Unacceptable shadowing and loss of daylight/sunlight. The 3.5m acoustic fence will result in a huge loss of daylight into three of our main living spaces. Furthermore, our house will be in shadow all day. At present the sun rises along this side of our home so we receive sunshine until around 2pm in the afternoon and there is beautiful natural daylight all day. Our existing dining area window is 4m in height, so there will only be a very small amount of visible sky remaining through this window.
 3. Visual intrusion, dominance and an overbearing impact or harmful loss of outlook.
The visual intrusion will have the effect of facing a barricade daily, a huge dominating structure, and be a constant reminder of the loss of outlook once enjoyed.

To understand how the acoustic fence, ball netting and rugby posts will look we have used AI to generate some images.

There are no elevations in the proposal whatsoever, which we found highly unusual, so we have had an attempt at this ourselves.

We are novices but shown below we have aimed to demonstrate how the proposal for the “Wokingham City Wall” affects our amenity.



4. Noise, vibration and disturbance

We are greatly disturbed by the results of the investigation we have carried out using the Venta Acoustics Noise Impact Assessment Report.

Without going into too much detail, as we have submitted an ACE report specifically about noise, we conclude the following.

- a. The acoustic fence is a mitigation measure as the proposal recognises the harm that will be caused by the excess noise of the pitches.
- b. Player shouting and verbal communication, spectator support, impact noise from balls and posts, noise from whistles and alarms and

mechanical noise from pitch maintenance equipment and vehicles are all to be expected from this proposal and no amount of screening can entirely eliminate these noises. Sound will still travel around and over the fence, affecting our living spaces and bedrooms, as well as those of our neighbours. We are told to expect this in the holidays, evenings and weekends too if the school follows through on their plans to publicly let the facilities.

The mitigation efforts in the proposal to reduce the noise harm to our residential amenity has the major undesired effect of creating significant new visual harm.

Contrast this to the currently very quiet residential space we enjoy in our home and garden. Along with reconciling my daughters shift patterns, a baby's sleeping patterns and an anxious rescue dog who barks at every disturbance it is fair to say that we will be massively impacted by the noise of this development, even with the acoustic fence.

5. Artificial light pollution

The absence of a lighting proposal is troubling as it renders the pitches unusable in the late afternoons or evenings, especially when the proposal makes much of the plan to make the pitches available for community use.

We believe the school do intend to floodlight the pitches, as the bursar explained, they just don't have the funds to do this yet. The application should be assessed including floodlighting as this is the school's intention.

Due to the proximity of the pitches we will be bathed in artificial light for innumerable hours. The artificial lighting impact on any remaining wildlife will also be hugely detrimental in this regard.

6. Odour dust and fumes. The heavy machinery used to maintain the pitches is almost certainly going to generate dust and fumes, especially if the long hot summers are due to continue. There won't be grass to maintain, unless an irrigation system is planned (there is no mention of this in the proposal).
7. Crime or the perception of unsafe environments. We have a concern about the strip of no man's land and who has access to it but primarily under this heading we find ourselves mostly troubled by the likelihood of balls impacting our person and property. We can not see in the proposal any

measures to prevent cricket balls from careering out of the pitch boundaries directly into our gardens and homes.

The jeopardy of not knowing when and where any ball strikes might happen is beyond our comprehension. Without a ball strike survey, the plan to place the cricket pitch where it currently is leads us directly into the path of these balls. The proposal states there would be rugby netting behind the posts however we understand that it's likely the school will also intend to have a football pitch.

The velocity of a ball strike from any of these sports is likely to cause serious injury, especially to an infant who will be regularly at home and in our garden.

Our quality of life and quiet enjoyment in retirement will be overshadowed by a dominant structure, loss of light, harmful enclosure and loss of outlook, noise disturbance and the threat of being struck by stray balls.

This is far from the expectation we had, and rights we believe we are intended to have, in the planning framework, to enjoy our properties without unacceptable impacts.



- There is no escaping the fundamental principle of planning law and practice that a development must be suitable for its proposed location. Overall, the site is unsuitable as I've made attempts to demonstrate above. If the site was suitable for sports facilities, there would be no need for the acoustic screening.
- The proposal does not enhance the nature and character of the landscape; it has a negative detrimental effect with human interaction and manmade structures including ugly fences, ball netting and goal posts.

Contrast this to the beautiful landscape that we can see out of our windows now. Described as rough grassland by the proposer, that will hardly change because of the development, we couldn't disagree more.



- The layout of the pitches is not well designed and looks dangerous, without enough land for adequate run-offs, inappropriate orientation and inconsiderate thought to neighbouring properties (the athletics track is right next to our boundary).
- Insufficient information has been provided to fully assess the ecological harm to the site. It will inevitably lead to a loss of fauna and flora, instead of which we can expect hard landscaping and harmful ball nets. This is a site that has historically been enjoyed by many species of bats and birds, together with deer, hedgehogs, mice & voles, badgers, foxes and squirrels. We witness this wildlife on an almost daily basis, having lived at Hart Dyke Close for 22 years.

- There is a loss of protected trees and hedgerow, and further damage is risked to tree roots by the plan to erect the enormous acoustic fence (which has been omitted from the arboricultural impact assessment document).
- The proposal does not specify any planting that might reinstate the landscape and soften the effect of the acoustic fence.
- The proposal does not adequately assess the potential for increasing existing flood risk. The flood risks are minimised in the proposal even though the previous bursar recognizes that this is real event that happens annually.
- Highway implications are understated as almost inevitably there will be an increase in vehicle movement for players and spectators. If the school is successful in letting the facilities to external parties this too will generate additional traffic and have implications for local roads and road users with parents parking inconsiderately.
- The application has not sufficiently demonstrated the need for this development. The value of the playing fields to external parties appears to have been overstated. This application is desired by the school and we consider it unlikely to be a valued community asset due to the remoteness and unsuitability of the site.
- The new facilities are only intended to serve the school. The policy framework in LPU HC4, heavily relied upon in the proposal, states that facilities should be “well related to the communities they serve”. It is hard to accept that this proposal relates well to its community when it causes so much harm to the neighbouring residents.

We respectfully request that Wokingham Borough Council reject this planning application and do not allow the creeping urbanisation of a green field.