

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261371
Site Address:	The Pavilion, Matson Drive, Remenham, Wokingham, RG9 3HB
Expiry Date:	4 August 2026
Site Visit Date:	12 June 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of safety netting to the boundary of the cricket ground and Remenham Lane along with associated works.	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC09 – Development and Flood Risk TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
092581	Proposed demolition of existing cricket pavilion and erection of replacement pavilion.	Approve 03 April 2009
070610	Proposed erection of electronic cricket scoreboard	Approve 15 June 2007
073004	Application for temporary permission for the erection of a toilet facility. Retrospective. Resubmission of app TP/2006/8425.	Approve 12 June 2007
061801	Proposed erection of cricket scoreboard.	Refused 15 January 2007
060505	Application for temporary permission for the erection of a toilet facility. Retrospective.	Refused 08 November 2006
021326	Proposed extension to clubhouse. Retrospective.	Approve 17 October 2002
012371	Proposed alterations to cricket ground, erection of replacement pavilion, car park and landscaping works.	Withdrawn 17 April 2002
010638	Proposed erection of non-illuminated advertising boards (Retrospective)	Refused 06 September 2001

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection, subject to condition.
WBC Drainage – No objection.
WBC Highways – No comment to make.
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No comments received.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.
WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods)
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received.

External

Sport England – No objection. Recommends the club undertakes a ball strike risk assessment.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	Two objection letters received. Concerns relate to: - Visual impact and effect on rural character.

	- Scale and height of the proposed netting. - Lack of detailed design information. - Potential for mitigation through retractable/seasonal operation. - Impact on neighbouring residents' outlook.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a large plot located to the east of Henley-on-Thames town centre. The application site relates to Henley Cricket Club. There are several buildings and outbuildings on the northern perimeter of the playing field to support the sports activities that are played on site. The cricket green and wicket are sited centrally within the plot.

Along the southern and eastern site boundaries the trees are protected under Group TPO 1027/2001 G1 (17 Lombardy Poplar trees) and Group TPO 1027/2001 G2 (10 Horse Chestnut trees).

Adjoining the southwestern corner of the site is Grade II Listed 'The Little Angel' public house. The southern end of the proposed cricket nets fall within the buffer zone of the designated heritage asset.

Proposal:

This application seeks approval for the erection of no. 5 support posts each 10m in height, with safety netting between.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located outside of defined settlement limits. As such, the site falls within Wokingham countryside. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy (CS) outlines where development in the countryside would be acceptable; the proposal would need to demonstrate compliance with the policy in order to be supported in principle.

The overarching aim of Policy CP11, and protecting the countryside, is to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The criteria is as follows:

- 1) *It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
- 2) *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*

- 3) *It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*
- 4) *In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*
- 5) *In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*
 - i) *Bring about environmental improvements; or*
 - ii) *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building*
- 6) *Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) *Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*

From the above criteria, points 1 and 2 are those applicable to this development.

In terms of CS policy CP11, criteria 1, the new cricket safety net system would support the playing of cricket for members of the Henley Cricket Club and as such would promote recreation in the countryside.

Statutory consultee, Sports England were consulted and confirmed that the proposal would comply with exception 2 of the Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (amended 2021) and paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Exception 2 states *“The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use”*.

As part of the pre-application advice submission, a letter confirmed that the club had contacted Labosport Group (as recommended by the ECB (England & Wales Cricket Board)) to analyse the potential risk during senior match days of balls landing in adjacent residential front gardens and to indicate what height of barrier netting would be adequate to mitigate the risk. Labosport confirmed that netting to a height of 10m should prove adequate.

Paragraph 104 of the NPPF states: ‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless...’. In this instance, the proposed development complies with this paragraph as it is not proposed for the play space to be built on or removed.

In terms of CS policy CP11 criterion 2, the development would not be located an excessive distance from the pavilion; approximately 58m west. The erection of the replacement sports pavilion was approved under application 092581 (F/2009/01350) in 2009 and is located towards the northern edge of the site. The proposed cricket nets would be located along the western side boundary between Home Farm and the Cricket Sports Pavilion to the north and The Little Angel public house to the south. As such, development would be concentrated between existing built form and would not lead to excessive expansion of development away from the original building.

Based on the above, the development is considered to accord with criteria 1 and 2 of CS Policy CP11, with the other criteria not being relevant/ applicable to this scheme.

Location with the Green Belt:

In this instance, the site is located outside settlement limits within the Green Belt and the countryside.

The relevant considerations for development in the Green Belt are outlined in Paragraph 153 of the NPPF:

‘When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations’.

Paragraph 154 goes on to specify that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the eight exceptions applies. In this instance, criterion (b) is relevant and applies. It states;

‘The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;’.

Based on the above, the development is considered to accord with criterion ‘b’ of paragraph 154 of the NPPF and would not conflict with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy that is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. By virtue of the temporary nature of the netting being lowered when not in use, and removed/stored in the off-season, the proposal is considered to comply with the intention of paragraph 154 of the NPPF which is to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

Character of the Area:

No comments were received from the Council's Built Heritage Officer in relation to the application. However, heritage advice was provided at the pre-application stage for a similar proposal for cricket safety netting. The advice concluded that the installation would result in some harm to the setting of the conservation area, although this harm would be less than substantial and could be mitigated through the use of removable or retractable netting which could be lowered when not required.

In response to this advice, the applicant has amended the proposal to incorporate a temporary netting system capable of being lowered and removed when not in use.

Core Strategy Policy CP3 requires development proposals to be of an appropriate scale, form, height, layout and design that responds positively to local character and distinctiveness.

The proposed safety netting has been designed to fulfil its intended purpose of protecting neighbouring residential properties from cricket balls leaving the site. Evidence submitted by Labosport confirms that a 10m-high netting system is required to provide effective protection to dwellings located approximately 10m west of the cricket ground along Remenham Lane.

The Council has received two objections raising concerns regarding the visual impact of the proposed netting and supporting posts. These concerns have been carefully considered as part of the assessment.

The submitted plans show five permanent support posts positioned at approximately 15m intervals along a 60m section of the western side of the cricket ground. The existing mature boundary hedgerow would be retained and would continue to provide a degree of screening from Remenham Lane. The generous spacing between the posts avoids the appearance of a continuous built structure along the boundary, while the open and permeable nature of the netting would allow views through the site and towards the surrounding countryside beyond.

The design of the proposal incorporates a number of measures intended to minimise visual intrusion. The safety netting would not be permanently erected and would be lowered and removed when not required. The supporting posts would be of a slender construction and finished in a recessive colour. The submitted Heritage Statement advises that the posts are expected to be lightweight and finished in a dark green or similarly recessive colour to reduce their prominence within the landscape. Given the importance of these design details to the acceptability of the development, a planning condition is recommended requiring full details of the posts, including their materials, finish and colour, to be submitted and approved prior to installation.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the visual impact of the development remains limited, conditions are recommended requiring the netting to be lowered and removed when not in use and to be dismantled and stored during the cricket off-season. These measures are considered necessary to secure the mitigation relied upon in the assessment of the proposal's impact on the character and appearance of the area.

Whilst the proposed netting and support posts would introduce a noticeable man-made feature within this rural setting, the limited number of posts, retention of the existing hedgerow, the permeable nature of the netting, and the temporary operation of the safety system would substantially reduce its visual impact. Subject to conditions securing the final design details of the posts, together with the lowering and removal of the netting when not in use and its seasonal removal during the off-season, the proposal is considered to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. Accordingly, the development is considered to comply with Policy CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and Section 13 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development should be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces.

Overlooking;

The proposed netting and posts would not incorporate any platforms, cameras or enclosed elements, nor would they facilitate human access. As a result, the structures would not introduce any new opportunities for overlooking of neighbouring dwellings or gardens. Accordingly, the proposal would not give rise to any loss of privacy impacts.

There are four neighbouring residential properties within the vicinity of the proposed development. All surrounding properties would be between 10m and 20m from the siting of the proposed netting and posts.

Loss of Light & Overbearing:

The netting and supporting posts would be of a slim, linear form, with limited solid massing. As such, the structures would not create a meaningful obstruction to daylight or sunlight when assessed against neighbouring windows or private amenity spaces which would be more than 10m away. The development would therefore not result in any discernible loss of light to neighbouring properties.

While the netting and posts would have a vertical extent of approximately 10m, its slimline specification and lack of bulk ensure that it would not appear visually dominant or oppressive when viewed from neighbouring land.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposal would not impact the existing parking arrangements and the council's Highways officer had no comment to make.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is in flood zone 3 and the council's Drainage officer was consulted. They raised no objection and commented:

"The submitted Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that the proposed safety netting at Henley Cricket Club is appropriate within Flood Zone 3 and fully compliant with national and local planning policy. The development is of a type that is compatible with flood risk areas, does not introduce vulnerability, and does not interfere with flood flows or storage. It will not increase flood risk elsewhere and will remain safe for its lifetime without the need for significant mitigation measures".

Landscape and Trees:

The Council's Tree and Landscape Officer raises no objection to the proposed installation of retractable netting and safety poles and has confirmed that the amended plans submitted on 30 June 2026 are acceptable.

The officer notes that the proposed permanent post located adjacent to the existing vehicular access on Remenham Lane would be positioned in close proximity to a line of existing evergreen trees. It is therefore accepted that the precise siting of this post may need to be adjusted during installation to avoid impacts on tree roots and canopies and to ensure the continued health of the trees.

The officer highlights the importance of the evergreen trees, which provide a number of functions including visual screening, acting as a physical barrier to cricket balls, and contributing to the sense of enclosure of the cricket ground and wider area. Should any

pruning be required to facilitate the development, such works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified arboricultural contractor.

Overall, the Tree and Landscape Officer is satisfied that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on existing trees or the character of the surrounding landscape

Conclusion:

For the reasons set out above and subject to conditions, the proposed development is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

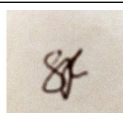
Conditions agreed: Yes

Recommendation: Approval

Date: 21 July 2026

Earliest date for decision: 1 July 2026

Recommendation agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)



Date: 24.7.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Outside Development Location
Countryside
Green Belt
Flood Zone 3

**Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone – Amber
Borders Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area**