

3rd June 2026

Wokingham Borough Council (the "**Council**")
Development Management & Compliance
P.O Box 157
Shute End,
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir / Madam,

Planning Application for the proposed installation of safety netting on the boundary of Henley Cricket Ground and Remenham Lane – Henley Cricket Club, Matson Drive, Remenham, Henley on Thames, RG9 3DB

On behalf of my clients, Henley Cricket Club, please find enclosed a full planning application for the installation of safety netting and all associated works and operations at Henley Cricket Ground.

Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the installation of safety netting at Henley Cricket Club, located at Matson Drive, Remenham, Henley-on-Thames.

The proposal seeks permission for the erection of a series of slender posts, approximately 10 metres in height, supporting retractable safety netting along the western boundary of the cricket ground adjacent to Remenham Lane. The purpose of the proposal is to improve safety by preventing cricket balls from leaving the site and affecting adjacent properties and highway users.

This statement provides a comprehensive assessment of the proposal against the Development Plan, national policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and other material considerations. Particular attention is given to Green Belt policy, which represents the primary planning consideration.

Site Location and Context

The application site comprises Henley Cricket Club, an established recreational facility located to the east of Henley-on-Thames. The site sits outside defined settlement limits and is located within the countryside and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The cricket ground is characterised by an open playing field with a central pitch and associated pavilion buildings located toward the northern boundary. Mature trees and hedgerow planting define the southern and western boundaries, creating a strong vegetated edge along Remenham Lane.

The site is subject to several planning constraints, including its location within Flood Zone 3, proximity to the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area, and adjacency to the Grade II listed Little Angel public house.

Despite these designations, the site is already in active sporting use and forms part of the established recreational landscape of the area.

Planning History and Pre-Application Advice

Pre-application advice was sought from the Local Planning Authority under reference 260657 in March 2026. The Council confirmed that the proposal is acceptable in principle as a facility supporting outdoor recreation, subject to consideration of design, Green Belt, and heritage impacts.

The Council specifically noted that:

- The proposal supports the existing use of the site as a playing field
- The development is likely to comply with Green Belt policy provided openness is preserved
- The temporary and retractable nature of the netting is an important factor
- Heritage impacts would be limited and categorised as less than substantial harm

The Council also confirmed that a Heritage Statement and Flood Risk Assessment would be required, both of which accompany this application.

Proposed Development

The proposal comprises the installation of safety netting along the western boundary of the cricket ground. The netting would be supported by a series of slender vertical posts reaching a maximum height of approximately 10 metres.

The netting is designed to be retractable and will be lowered when not in use, with the potential for seasonal removal or storage.

The development is minimal in physical terms, with only limited ground disturbance associated with the installation of post foundations. No buildings, hardstanding, or additional infrastructure are proposed.

Planning Policy Context

The statutory framework is set out under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan comprises the Wokingham Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. National policy is set out in the NPPF.

The most relevant policies are:

- NPPF Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land
- Core Strategy Policy CP11: Development in the countryside
- Local Plan Policy TB24: Designated heritage assets
- Local Plan Policies CC09–CC10: Flood risk and drainage

The NPPF gives substantial weight to the protection of the Green Belt and requires that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Assessment of Key Planning Issues

Principle of Development

The proposal represents ancillary infrastructure required to support an established outdoor recreational use. The NPPF explicitly recognises that facilities for outdoor sport may be appropriate in the Green Belt, provided they preserve openness and do not conflict with its purposes.

The Council has confirmed at pre-application stage that the proposal complies in principle with this exception, as it supports the ongoing use of the cricket ground without affecting pitch quality or quantity.

Green Belt

The site lies within the Green Belt, where the fundamental aim of policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF sets out exceptions to inappropriate development, including the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, provided openness is preserved.

This proposal falls squarely within this exception, as it:

- Supports an existing recreational use
- Does not involve built floorspace
- Does not extend development into new areas

As such, the proposal should not be considered inappropriate development.

Impact on Openness

Openness has both spatial and visual dimensions. The proposed development introduces vertical elements in the form of slender posts; however, these do not materially reduce openness.

The netting is permeable and does not create a sense of enclosure. The posts occupy negligible ground area and do not displace meaningful volumes of open space.

Importantly, the netting can be lowered when not in use, meaning that its visual presence is intermittent rather than permanent.

In this regard, the development preserves both the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances

If the development were to be considered inappropriate, very special circumstances would clearly exist.

The key considerations are the need to ensure public and user safety. Cricket balls leaving the site present an existing and ongoing risk to:

- Adjacent residential properties
- Users of Remenham Lane

- Pedestrians and cyclists

The proposal provides a direct and necessary response to this issue. There are no alternative measures that would achieve the same level of mitigation without introducing comparable or greater impacts.

The proposal also supports the continued operation of a long-established community sporting facility, contributing to recreation, health, and social wellbeing.

These benefits, when taken together, clearly outweigh any perceived harm to the Green Belt.

Character and Visual Impact

The proposal introduces a series of vertical posts along the site boundary, which will be visible from Remenham Lane. The Council has acknowledged that this will have some visual effect, particularly in winter months when vegetation coverage is reduced. This is considered in further detail within the accompanying Heritage Statement.

However, the impact is limited by several factors, including the slender form of the posts, their spacing, and the presence of existing vegetation. The temporary nature of the netting further reduces its visual permanence.

Overall, the impact on character is considered to be modest and acceptable.

Heritage Considerations

The site lies adjacent to the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II listed Little Angel public house.

The Built Heritage Officer, at pre application stage, has confirmed that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area at the lower end of the spectrum.

No harm is identified to the setting of the listed building due to effective screening from existing vegetation.

In accordance with the NPPF, this low-level harm must be weighed against public benefits, which in this case are clear and significant.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is located within Flood Zone 3; however, the proposal is of a type that is compatible with flood risk areas. This is considered further within the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment.

The development does not introduce vulnerable uses, does not obstruct flood flows, and does not increase surface water runoff. The Council's Drainage Engineer has confirmed that the proposal presents a low flood risk in principle.

Residential Amenity

The proposal does not result in any loss of light, overlooking, or overbearing impact to neighbouring properties.

The structures are slender, lack massing, and do not facilitate human occupation. The Council has confirmed that there would be no harm to neighbouring amenity. The proposal in fact offers a safety mechanism to prevent stray cricket balls leaving the ground and endangering local residential properties and their occupants.

Planning Balance

The proposal delivers clear and significant benefits, including improved safety for residents and road users, and the continued viability of a valued community sports facility.

Any identified harm is limited. The Green Belt is preserved, heritage harm is less than substantial, and visual impacts are modest and reversible.

The proposal therefore accords with both national and local policy.

Conclusion

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and in detailed terms.

The scheme supports an established recreational use, preserves the openness of the Green Belt, and delivers important public safety benefits. Any harm identified is limited and clearly outweighed by the benefits of the proposal.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

We would welcome early engagement and collaboration with the Council during the course of the application and are of course happy to clarify or supplement any part of the submission should it assist Officers in reaching a timely and well-informed decision.

We look forward to working positively with the Council.

Yours faithfully,

Alex Cresswell
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