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PLANNING & DESIGN STATEMENT

for the construction of a

NEW SPORTS PITCH WITH ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL WORKS

at

**LUCKLEY HOUSE SCHOOL
LUCKLEY ROAD, WOKINGHAM RG40 3EU**

Date: 16th July 2026
Ref: TCG 7004 - design statement

INTRODUCTION

This statement accompanies a planning application submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent to construct sports pitches on land at Luckley House School. The statement will explain how the design proposals have been prepared to suit the site and its surroundings, and also to satisfy planning policy and other relevant technical requirements.

LUCKLEY HOUSE SCHOOL

Luckley House School is coeducational independent school offering day and flexible boarding provision for pupils aged 7 to 13 years. Bearwood Lakes is an established golf club located to the west of Wokingham. The school offers a broad curriculum, celebrating achievement in arts and sport as much as academic achievement.

The school site measures circa 20 acres in total. The existing built form at the site consists of approximately 20 buildings of various styles providing education and associated accommodation. The site also features a car park, all weather sports pitch, grass sports area, and associated open space.

THE EXISTING SITE

The portion of land relevant to this application is an open grass area located directly to the south of the existing all weather pitch and grass sports pitch. The area is loosely rectangular in shape, measuring approximate 115m x 160m. The area is primarily flat and level and laid to grass, with dense tree growth to the northern boundary, and more sporadic tree growth dotted along the western and southern boundaries.

THE EXISTING SURROUNDINGS

The western site boundary abuts the curtilage of the residential property forming Hart Dyke Close – specifically Nos 8-16, which consist of detached dwellings. Southern and eastern boundaries abut open fields, consisting of dormant grassland.

THE PROPOSALS

The application seeks consent to construct a sports pitch area to provide a cricket pitch, 2 rugby pitches, and a 300m athletics track. Also with associated external works consisting of;

- An extension to the existing footpath adjacent to the existing all-weather pitch to provide pedestrian access
- The construction of a permeable vehicle crossing to allow access for pitch maintenance vehicles
- The construction of a boundary fence to the eastern boundary
- The erection of rugby goal posts
- The erection of ball-stop netting
- The erection of an acoustic screen fence parallel to the western boundary

The rugby pitches and athletics track will be provided by way of line markings onto the grass, favouring athletics in the summer and rugby in the winter. The cricket pitch will be provided by way of an artificial cricket wicket, with a specialist carpet surface.

PLANNING POLICY

Principle of new sports facilities

There is strong policy support in the development plan for the proposed development, and this is particularly in the emerging policy framework of the District. The Submission Local Plan Update 2023-2040 recognises the benefit of improving sports provision in the District. Policy SS1: Sustainable development principles states that

development proposals will be expected to:...

- a) Contribute to meeting identified development needs...*
- e) Promote healthy lifestyles, well-being and social inclusion...*
- o) Provide or contribute to the provision of social, physical, transport, and green and blue infrastructure to support communities.*

The spatial strategy of the Plan leads on from this, with relevance to the current proposals as follows:

Policy SS2: Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy

*Growth should create strong, cohesive and inclusive communities that provide for a high quality of life.
A larger number of people should be able to access jobs, services and facilities locally to help to
minimise unnecessary travel.*

The provision of a sports field associated with an existing school would clearly fit in with the objective to promote sport, healthy lifestyles and contribute to social and physical infrastructure of the community. The application site and the location for the proposed playing field adjoins Wokingham, which is identified in Policy SS2 as a Major Settlement, with the highest range of services and facilities. Policy SS2 states that Major Settlements will be the focus of housing growth (the subject of other policies in the Plan), as that is supported by wider service provision; the expansion and enhancement of playing fields at an existing school represents improved service provision for existing and future housing growth.

The location of the proposed playing fields lies within land designated as countryside. Policy SS5: Development in the Countryside sets out the types of development that are permitted in such areas, which includes:

i) Outdoor sports, recreation, leisure and nature conservation development that is demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate for the use

The proposals in this application accord with these requirements:

- *Necessary:* the cricket pitch, two grass rugby pitches and grass athletics track are necessary to provide good sports facilities for students at the school
- *Reasonable:* the quantum of new sports provision is appropriate in scale and layout for the School. A cricket pitch is a reasonable addition to a school, whilst two rugby pitches offer good provision for winter sports for students. The athletics track is the marking of grass as a track, to enable summer sports on the same land.
- *Proportionate:* as above, the scale of the new facilities is appropriate for the school and the wider area. The associated infrastructure is proportionate to the new development, access track and path, fencing and netting.

The broad support is also expressed in the adopted development Plan. The Core Strategy 2010 states:

CP3 - General Principles for development

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:...

- 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;*

The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (MDDLDP) allows for development on the edge of settlements, provided it is appropriate to the location and the transition with the countryside:

Policy CC02: Development Limits

2. Planning permission for proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where they can demonstrate that the development, including boundary treatments, is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.

The broad support for development that provides facilities for social facilities and recreational/sports use is set out further in the Submission Local Plan relating to healthy communities. A general supportive policy is set out as follows:

Policy HC1: Promoting healthy communities

1. Vibrant, healthy and safe communities will be promoted through a high-quality environment with local services to support health, social and cultural wellbeing

The Plan specifically supports the enhancement of existing sports facilities, and the provision of new sports and recreation provision:

Policy HC4: Open space, sports, recreation and play facilities

Existing Facilities

1. Existing open space, sports and recreation and play facilities will be protected, maintained and where possible enhanced...

New Facilities and Residential Development

3. Development proposals for open space, sport and recreation and play facilities will be encouraged and supported, in line with other policies in the Local Plan Update and Sport England guidance. New open space, sports, recreation and play facilities should be well related to the communities they serve and should, where possible, promote their dual use by being co-located with other community uses, such as schools.

This policy does not distinguish between ownership of open space or sport facilities, which is presumably since it does not matter who provides such facilities: a new sports facility is of benefit to the population who use it as it leads to health and social benefits. However, it is worth noting that in the current proposal the School is intending for use by the local community outside the school use.

Landscape and character policy

In terms of Landscape Character, the site is within N1: Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland, as identified within the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2019. This area is identified as a sandy pastoral landscape, close to the urban area of Wokingham and forested areas to the south. The proximity to the built-up area has led to a variety of land uses including rough horse paddocks, pick-your-own farms and small business parks. The application site accords with this description, being a rough and unmanaged pasture land.

The proposals would bring a more formalised appearance to the land through the maintenance as grass pitch. There would be little change to the physical character, since the proposals are for the use of the land and limited physical changes: rugby posts, fencing and netting. The general open character of the site and wider landscape would therefore be retained. New planting is proposed around the site to assist in screening, and the new sports area would be seen as a well-contained parcel of land adjoining the existing school and housing.

The works to the land are kept away from trees on the existing boundaries of the site, to ensure no impact upon those. The application is accompanied by a Tree Survey report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The scheme includes the removal of a small number of Category C trees, with the position of the access path and the specification for that path ensuring no impact upon retained trees in that location.

Thus, the requirements of Policies NE4 and NE5 of the Local Plan Update would be satisfied, and policy TB21 of the MDDL, as the proposals would protect and incorporate the existing tree and hedgerows, protect the character of the landscape, and incorporate additional planting which is specified on the accompanying drawings.

Amenity

The proposals are for sports use at the existing school, with the new facilities beyond the rear garden of the adjoining houses. The activities by the school would be daytime only within their normal school hours and reasonable after-school club times. All use will be managed by the school in line with their established safeguarding and behaviour policies, with activities structured and supervised. The proposals include acoustic fencing to the west of the proposed pitches in accordance with the recommendations set out in the accompanying noise impact assessment. This fence is kept away from the boundary with the adjoining houses and is of sufficient distance to ensure no intrusive effect upon their outlook.

While the primary purpose of the field is to meet the needs of the School, they see that it may create opportunities for wider community benefit through organised partnerships in the daytime, outside school hours. Such use would similarly be closely regulated and managed to ensure no disturbance. The scheme incorporates netting behind the rugby posts to prevent balls entering neighbouring gardens.

Due to the specific nature of the proposal as a facility attached to the existing school, and the high degree of supervision and management that is possible on such a facility, it is considered there would be no conflict with Policy DH2, which states development must have no unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing occupiers, and Policy HC6 that requires development to have no adverse effect by virtue of noise disturbance.

Flooding and drainage

A Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is enclosed which demonstrates there is no flood risk to the proposed development, and that it would not impact on flood risk elsewhere. The proposals include an underground rainwater harvesting tank which is linked to new pitch drainage, to ensure drainage of the pitch and provide a water source for pitch irrigation.

The scheme satisfies the requirements of Policies FD1 and FD2 of the Local Plan Update and CC09 and CC10 of the MDDL P.

Ecology, biodiversity and land classification

The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment report, along with a Biodiversity Net Gain metric. Compliance with the 10% gain requirement is proposed to be by way of the purchase of off-site units.

The Natural England Open Data shows the DEFRA agricultural land classification for the site as lying within an urban area, and so there is no registered ALC. However, it is recognised that the land is currently open and undeveloped, so it may have a character of the adjoining land to the south which is shown by DEFRA as having an ALC of Grade 3.

The land is at present unkempt pasture, which is not used for farming and is not part of a wider agricultural unit. The use of the land as grass sports field would not involve any built development, and so would not sterilise the land for any possible future uses, if that was chosen at some point.

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Outside of school hours, the school offer their facilities to the general public. Groups currently benefitting are as follows;

- In 2 Sport
- One Ten Life
- BollyBlitz
- Challengers Cricket Academy
- Binfield FC Girls
- Wokingham Netball
- Scripture Union
- Barkham Church
- Binfield Cricket Club

Whilst the proposals are primarily aimed at improving the sporting facilities of the school, they also have potential for hire to local clubs outside of school hours, thereby offering a benefit to the wider community.

With regard to neighbour involvement, the School have communicated the attached proposals to the 8 houses that back directly onto the proposed site (16, 15, 14, 12, 10, 9, 8 & 7 Hart Dyke Close). The communication was by way of a pre-application letter drop sent on 26th March 2026 to inform them of the above intentions and asking for any feedback, questions or discussions. No responses have been received.

THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPA

The site lies within the 400m-5km zone of the SPA. However, mitigation is not required as the proposals don't result in the net gain of dwellings or an increase in local population, and therefore there is no detriment to the SPA.

HIGHWAYS

Highways matters aren't considered relevant. All existing parking is retained, there is no change to the parking provision at the site for all vehicle types, and the proposals don't serve to increase the capacity of the school giving rise to the need to provide additional parking.

RIGHTS OF WAY

There are no public rights of way either crossing the site or adjacent to the site. As a result, rights of way aren't considered relevant to the proposals.

TREES

The relevance of trees and the Tree Preservation Orders that existing at the site are duly noted. Accordingly, the application is accompanied by a BS5837 Tree Survey report. The scheme proposals include the removal of a small number of Category C trees, however an Arboricultural Impact Assessment is also submitted confirming that the proposal clearance and construction work is detailed appropriately in the context of maintaining the health of the retained tree growth on site.

FLOODING

Whilst it is acknowledged that the site area is greater than 1ha, the site is entirely Flood Zone 1 and the proposals don't represent any change to the topography or permeability of the site. The site remains primarily laid to grass, and the small areas forming the vehicle access and cricket wicket are both permeable construction. A Flood Risk Assessment is included within the application in order to satisfy validation criteria, and its brief content serves to confirm that flood risk isn't a concern.

ECOLOGY

The relevance of ecology in planning policy requirements is duly noted. To this end, the application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment report, along with a Biodiversity Net Gain metric. The requirement for the proposals to deliver a 10% net gain is duly noted, however it isn't feasible for this to be delivered on site. Accordingly, the proposal is for the applicant to enter into a S106 Agreement relating to providing funding for the purchase of the requisite number of off-site units.

DRAINAGE

Foul drainage is not relevant to the proposals. Stormwater drainage will be provided by way of land drainage laid in as part of the pitch construction, connected to a harvesting tank located in the north-east corner of the site to provide a sustainable source of water for pitch irrigation. The location is chosen because it suits the slight slope of the site, and is also a portion of the site that's outside the extent of the pitches and also outside any root protection areas. Thereafter, the site remains as an entirely permeable area, so the proposals don't represent a concern with regard to loss of permeability or run-off beyond the site boundary.

NOISE

The positioning of the site adjacent to existing residential properties in Hart Dyke Close is duly noted. The potential for noise to arise from school sport is acknowledged, and therefore the application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment undertaken by Venta Acoustics. The report recommends the installation of a 3.5m high acoustic screen fence positioned inboard from the western site boundary, and this forms part of the application proposals. The fence serves to sufficiently screen noise arising from the sports use to ensure suitably quiet conditions remain to adjacent gardens.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

Floodlighting to the pitches does not form part of the proposals. This effectively serves to ensure the use of the facilities is limited to daylight hours only.

CONCLUSION

The proposals are considered to represent an appropriate scheme of sporting facilities, achieving an appropriate balance of improvement to school facilities whilst also being entirely respectful of the nature of the site and its neighbours. They're considered to meet planning policy requirements whilst also being compatible with the surrounding built environment. I therefore respectfully request that the application is considered favourably.



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