

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Harriet Sanders.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/02079/FP	Removal of existing two lane cricket nets. Replacement with three lane 'closed' cricket nets with a minor change to the location.	The Pavilion Chambers Lane Ickleford Hertfordshire SG5 3YA

Submitted Plan Nos

EN05 Location Plan 25001 01 AP0100 100

1.0 Policies

SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions

T1 Assessment of transport matters

NE4 Biodiversity and geological sites

NE2 Landscape

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 None relevant.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 Site Notice posted – no comments received.

3.2 Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology – no comment.

3.3 Ecology – no objection subject to Biodiversity Net gain condition.

3.4 Ickleford Parish Council – no comments received at the time of writing this report.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site is located on the northern edge of Ickleford. The site is currently used as a cricket club with outdoor nets and pitch.

4.1.2 The site is located outside the village boundary, in the green belt and in an archaeologically sensitive area.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 Consent is sought for:

“Removal of existing two lane cricket nets. Replacement with three lane 'closed' cricket nets with a minor change to the location.”

4.2.2 The nets will be 4m in height, 27m in length and 11m in width. They will be enclosed style nets with a synthetic playing surface carpet, surrounded by steelwork tube support structure and netting. The replacement nets will be sited slightly further off the boundary than the existing.

4.3 Key Issues

4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are:

- ☐ The principle of the proposal in the Green Belt and outside the village boundary;
- ☐ The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- ☐ Impact on neighbouring amenity;
- ☐ Impact on trees;
- ☐ Biodiversity matters;
- ☐ Access and parking matters;
- ☐ Impact on the environment.

Principle of development:

4.3.2 The site is located within the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at paras 153 and 154 that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. The guidance continues that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the exceptions listed applies. Relevant to this application is the following exception:

- o *“b) 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;”*

4.3.3 The provisions of NFFP are supported in the Local Plan under Local Plan Policy SP5 and in the Sustainable Development Principles of the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2035 (Feb 2024).

4.3.4 The proposed replacement nets are an appropriate facility for outdoor sport and recreation and can therefore be considered under the exception above. The replacement nets will not cause unacceptable harm to the Green Belt or undermine the 5 purposes of the Green Belt. The exception criterion is considered to be met and the provisions of the NFFP, Local Plan policy SP5 and Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan are met.

4.3.5 The principle of the proposed development in the Green Belt and outside the village boundary is acceptable.

Design and Appearance

- 4.3.6 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that development will be granted provided the design of the development appropriately and positively responds to the site's local context together with other criteria to encourage a positive and sustainable form of development. This is consistent with Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 4.3.7 Whilst the proposed nets would be larger and more visually dominant than the existing design, they will not particularly alter the existing appearance of this part of the recreation grounds. They will not appear out of place or unacceptably harm the visual amenity of the locality or the existing character of the cricket field and open space.
- 4.3.8 The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with Local Plan policy D1, the principles of the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan and the core principles set out within the NPPF. The design and appearance are therefore acceptable.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties:

- 4.3.9 Policy D3 of the Local Plan permits development that does not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and where necessary encourages the use of mitigation measures to reduce these impacts. This is generally reflected by the provisions within the NPPF.
- 4.3.10 The site is set away from residential dwellings and is an existing use. No unacceptable harm will be caused to neighbouring amenity. The proposal therefore complies with the provisions of Local Plan policy D3 and the provisions of the NPPF.

Impact on Existing Trees

- 4.3.11 The applicant has submitted a tree report in support of the current proposal. The report sets out the following:
- ☐ The proposal allows for the healthy retention of trees;
 - ☐ The arborial landscape character of the site will be retained;
 - ☐ No tree canopies will overhang the proposed nets;
 - ☐ Building works can progress safely without the need for any facilitation pruning;
 - ☐ The proposed cricket net installation is situated outside of the assessed root protection area (RPAs) of all of the trees. There are therefore no below ground constraints – either on the new structure or vice versa.
- 4.3.12 The report concludes that the principal arboricultural features within the site can be retained and, subject to precautionary measures, adequately protected during development activities.

- 4.3.13 It is reasonable and necessary to attach a condition to ensure the protection of the existing trees during construction. The proposal complies with Local Plan policy NE2 and the provisions of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Matters and Proposed Tree Planting

- 4.3.14 North Herts District Council Ecology Officer has been consulted as part of this application. They raised no ecological objection to the proposal. The proposal demonstrates a Biodiversity Net Gain of 13.35% thereby meeting the mandatory requirement for 10 % BNG. A BNG condition has been attached to the approval to ensure that this is met.

- 4.3.15 The provisions of Local Plan policy NE4 and the NPPF have therefore been met.

Access and Parking

- 4.3.16 There will be no material change to the existing use. The existing access and parking is unaffected and remains acceptable. There will be no impact on the adjacent public footpath. Local Plan policy T1 and the provisions of the NDDP are therefore met.

Environmental Implications:

- 4.3.17 The proposed development, by virtue of its limited scale in general terms together with the sustainable location would have no significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 14 of the NPPF.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The proposed replacement enclosed cricket nets is acceptable development in the green belt. The proposal is acceptable in design terms, will harm neighbouring amenity, will not cause harm to the existing trees on site, will provide acceptable biodiversity net gain and will not give rise to any additional parking or access matters. The proposal therefore meets the policy requirements of Local Plan policies SP5, D1, D3, NE2, NE4 and T1 and the provisions of the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2035 and the NPPF.

4.5 Alternative Options

- 4.5.1 None applicable

4.6 Pre-Commencement Conditions

- 4.6.1 The applicant is in agreement with the pre-commencement condition that is proposed.

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

2. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

4. Prior to the removal of the existing nets, the trees adjacent to the nets shall be protected by the erection of temporary chestnut paling or chain link fencing of a minimum height of 1.2 metres on a scaffolding framework, located at the appropriate minimum distance from the tree trunk in accordance with Section 4.6 of BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations'. The fencing shall be maintained intact for the duration of all engineering and building works. No building materials shall be stacked or mixed within 10 metres of the tree. No fires shall be lit where flames could extend to within 5 metres of the foliage, and no notices shall be attached to trees.

Reason: To prevent damage to or destruction of trees on the site in the interests of the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality, and to comply with Policy NE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that

development may not begin unless:

(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and

(b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Hertfordshire District Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>).

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 16 December 2025	