

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Saffron Loasby.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/00997/S73	Variation of Condition 25 of Development B of planning permission 15/00192/1 granted 22.03.2016 and varied by condition 8 of 22/03044/S73 granted 22.02.2023. Extension of hours of the All-Weather Pitch on Saturdays from 09.00 - 18.30 hours to 09.00 - 20.00 hours. The permitted hours on Monday-Fridays remain at 09.00-22.00 hours and Sundays and Bank Holidays at 09.00-18.00 hours.	Hitchin Cricket Ground Lucas Lane Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 2JA

Submitted Plan Nos

Location Plan

1.0 **Policies**

2.0 **Relevant site history**

- 2.2 15/00192/1 - Development A) Outline application for erection of 27 dwellings with access from Lucas Lane - details of scale, layout, design and landscaping are reserved;
Development B) Full planning application for the provision of all weather sports pitch with 8 x 15m floodlight columns, replacement clubhouse, scoreboard/implement shed with changing facilities, widened access from Gaping Lane and provision of additional parking – Approved 22/03/16.
- 2.3 22/03044/S73 - Variation of Condition 25 of Development B of planning permission 15/00192/1 granted 22.03.2016 - Extension of hours of All-Weather Pitch to Monday to Thursday 09.00 - 22.00; Friday 09.00 - 22.00; Saturday 09.00 - 18.30; Sundays 09.00 - 18.00; and Bank Holidays 10.00 - 18.00 – Approved 22/02/2023
- 2.4 23/01144/FP – Erection of single storey cricket pavilion - Approved 06/07/2023
- 2.5 24/02650/FP – Installation of permanent toilet – Approved 22/01/2025

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 Site Notice – Erected 27/05/2026 – Expiry 20/06/2026
Advert - 28/05/2026 – 20/06/2026
- 3.2 **Neighbours** – 376 neighbour letters were sent out. Five objections were received on the following grounds:
- Unacceptable impact on neighbour amenity through noise and disturbance
 - Light pollution.
 - Noise late into the night.
 - Traffic using Lucas Lane, which is already dangerous.
 - Increased traffic.
 - Lead to anti-social behaviour and public nuisance
 - Road surface deterioration
 - This stretch of road should have a 20mph speed limit
 - Running engines from coaches
 - Parking. Cars are regularly parked on the street causing issues for residents.

Three letters in support were received:

- Encourage exercise, health, wellbeing, community activity and wellbeing.
- Planning to be mindful of the vehicle access challenges
- Minor addition to the permitted hours.
- Greater beneficial use of the facilities.

3.3 **Sport England** - Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application as a statutory consultee and is supportive of the proposed variation of condition as a non-statutory consultee.

3.4 **NHC Environmental Health Noise and other nuisances, Air Quality and Contaminated Land** - No complaints have been received relating to noise from the permitted existing use of the ground. Given this and the modest increase I am minded to make no objection to the application.

3.5 **Herts County Council Ecology** - This application is exempt from Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The Ecology Service (LEADS) has not undertaken any scrutiny of the validity of the claimed exemption, however taking it at face value in this instance, the requirement for mandatory 10% biodiversity gain does not apply. After carrying out a rapid assessment of this application we have concluded that the proposals are unlikely to have any significant ecological impacts, therefore the application can be determined accordingly.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site is an artificial hockey/sports pitch with floodlights and enclosed by fencing. It is part of a larger cricket and sports club on the western edge of Hitchin (outlined in blue on the site location plan). The pitch is on land approx. 1m higher than the rest of the sports club. Trees, fencing and vegetation extend along most of the south and west boundaries. The north and east boundaries are comprised of wire mesh fencing.

4.1.2 Adjacent to the site to the north and east is a cricket pitch, sports pavilion, and car park serving the sports club. Arable agricultural land is to the west and SW. To the south-east is a residential nursing home. Newer residential dwellings are further to the east on the other side of the car park which were built as part of the original planning permission. Older dwellings are further east off Lucas Lane, Gaping Lane, and other nearby roads. The site is in the Green Belt.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 The original planning permission 15/00192/1 was for residential development; and also, for the provision of all-weather sports pitch with 8 x 15m floodlight columns, replacement clubhouse, scoreboard/implement shed with changing facilities, widened access from Gaping Lane and provision of additional parking.

4.2.2 A subsequent S73 application was submitted to vary Condition 25 of the previous permission by extending the hours of the use of the pitch. This changed the hours from the following:

4.2.3 • Monday to Thursdays – 09.00 – 22.00 hours

- Fridays – 09.00 - 21.00 hours
- Saturdays – 09.00 – 18.30 hours
- Sundays and Bank Holidays – 10.00 – 18.00 hours

To:

- Monday to Thursdays – 09.00 – 22.00 hours
- Fridays – 09.00 - 22.00 hours
- Saturdays – 09.00 – 18.30 hours
- Sundays – 09.00 – 18.00 hours
- Bank Holidays – 10.00 – 18.00 hours

4.2.4 This S73 application proposes to amend the hours further. The changed hours propose an additional 1.5 hours on Saturdays only, thus the hours changed to

- Monday to Thursdays – 09.00 – 22.00 hours
- Fridays – 09.00 - 22.00 hours
- **Saturdays – 09.00 – 20.00hours**
- Sundays – 09.00 – 18.00 hours
- Bank Holidays – 10.00 – 18.00 hours

4.2.5 The Hockey Club's first team has just been promoted to the England Hockey's National League for the 2026/27 hockey season which begins in September 2026. As fixtures in the National League can finish after 18.30 on Saturdays, the club would like the flexibility to allow this if required. An extension of the permitted hours to 20.00 on Saturdays is therefore sought. This would result in the pitch being used for 1.5 more hours each week

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The main material considerations relating to the proposed changes are whether the principle is acceptable, character and appearance, neighbour amenity, parking, and ecology.

Principle

4.3.2 The site is in the Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan. The application does not propose any new operational development or the change of use of land, and the use of the site will remain for outdoor sport, which is not inappropriate as stated in paragraph 154 of the NPPF. The proposal will not conflict with the types of development that are considered inappropriate in the Green Belt in the NPPF. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

Character and appearance

4.3.3 The proposal would increase the use of the pitch by 1.5 hours on Saturdays only. This represents a relatively minor extension when considered against the site's overall operating hours. As the additional hours are limited to a single day of the week, during which the facility is already used for sporting activities for the majority of the day, the nature and character of the extended use would be consistent with the existing use of the site. Consequently, the impacts on the character and appearance of the locality are considered to be acceptable.

Neighbour amenity

- 4.3.4 The proposal would extend the hours of use of the pitch by 1.5 hours, representing a modest increase when compared with the hours already approved. The nearest neighbouring properties comprise a nursing home to the south-east and residential dwellings located approximately 55 metres to the east of the site.
- 4.3.5 Given the limited nature of the extension and the fact that the additional hours would be added to a day when the pitch is already in use for the majority of the day, the proposal is expected to result in only a minor increase in noise and lighting associated with the facility. Furthermore, the proposed operating hours are not considered to be unreasonably early or late for an outdoor sports pitch. Having regard to the existing development and its approved hours of operation, the extended use is not considered to give rise to material harm to the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. Traffic generation and parking impacts would remain comparable to those arising from the current use of the site.
- 4.3.6 Significant weight is afforded to the fact that the Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the proposal. Accordingly, the impacts on residential amenity are considered acceptable.

Parking

- 4.3.6 The application site forms part of a wider cricket and hockey club, with a dedicated car park located to the east of the pitch. The adequacy of the parking provision was assessed and found acceptable as part of the original planning permission. As the nature of the use would remain unchanged and the proposed extension to the hours of use is limited, the proposal is not expected to generate a significant increase in parking demand. Accordingly, the existing parking provision is considered sufficient and would remain acceptable.

Ecology

- 4.3.7 The proposed longer opening hours will extend the impacts of lighting on bats in the bordering hedges and woodland. However, given that Hertfordshire Ecology have not objected to this, it is not considered that the proposal will result in harmful impacts to ecology.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The concerns raised by neighbouring occupiers have been carefully considered, including those relating to noise and disturbance, light pollution, traffic generation, parking pressures, anti-social behaviour and the condition and safety of Lucas Lane. However, the proposal seeks only a modest extension of the approved hours of use, amounting to an additional 1.5 hours on Saturdays when the pitch is already in use for most of the day.
- 4.4.2 As such, the character and intensity of the use would remain largely unchanged. The proposal is expected to result in only a minor increase in noise and lighting impacts, and these are not considered to give rise to material harm to the amenities of neighbouring

occupiers. Similarly, the limited extension to operating hours is not anticipated to result in a significant increase in vehicle movements or parking demand beyond that already associated with the authorised use of the site.

- 4.4.3 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the proposal, which is afforded significant weight in the assessment. Taking all matters into account, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on residential amenity, highway safety or parking provision. The objections raised have therefore been carefully considered but do not outweigh the benefits of the proposal or justify a refusal of planning permission. In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

5.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. Developments A and B - 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.

2. Development A - Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended, no development as set out in Classes A - E of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Order, (or any subsequent Statutory Instrument which revokes, amends and/or replaces those provisions) shall be carried out without first obtaining a specific planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Given the nature of this development, the Local Planning Authority considers that development which would normally be "permitted development" should be retained within planning control in the interests of the character and amenities of the area. LP Policy D1.

3. Development A - The development shall be carried out in accordance with the football related mitigation measures as approved by 17/04118/DOC.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory quantity, quality and accessibility of compensatory provision which secures a continuity of use.

4. Development A - The development shall be carried out in accordance with contamination measures approved as required by Condition 16 of planning permission 15/00192/1.

Reason: To ensure that any contamination affecting the site is dealt with in a manner that safeguards human health, the built and natural environment and controlled waters.

5. Development A - The development shall be in accordance with the Interim Travel Plan as approved by 18/01819/DOC.

Reason: To ensure that the development offers a wide range of travel choices to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment.

6. Development B - The All Weather Pitch hereby permitted shall only be used between the following hours:
 - o Monday to Thursdays - 09.00 - 22.00 hours
 - o Fridays - 09.00 - 22.00 hours
 - o Saturdays - 09.00 - 20.00 hours
 - o Sundays - 09.00 - 18.00 hours
 - o Bank Holidays - 10.00 - 18.00 hours

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of existing and future residential occupiers.

7. Development B - The development shall be in accordance with the Management and Maintenance Schedule approved under 17/00575/1DOC.

Reason: To ensure that the new facilities are capable of being managed and maintained to deliver playing pitches which are fit for purpose, sustainable and to ensure sufficient benefit of the development to sport.

8. Development B - The development shall be in accordance with the community use agreement approved by 17/00576/1DOC.

Reason: To secure well managed, safe community access to the sports facilities and to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport.

9. Development B - The development shall be in accordance with noise mitigation measures as approved by 17/00578/1DOC.

Reason: To protect the residential amenities of future residents.

10. Development B - The development shall be in accordance with the kitchen extract ventilation system approved by 17/00579/1DOC.

Reason: To protect the residential amenities of future residents.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

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: 14 August 2026	