# LONDON BOROUGH OF ENFIELD

# **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2011

Report of

Assistant Director, Planning & Environmental Protection

**Contact Officer:** 

Aled Richards Tel: 020 8379 3857 Andy Higham Tel: 020 8379 3848 Mr S. Newton Tel: 020 8379 3851 Ward: Chase

**Application Number: TP/10/1761** 

Category: Change of Use

LOCATION: LAND AT, WELLINGTON PLACE, WHITEWEBBS LANE, ENFIELD, EN2

9HH

**PROPOSAL:** Change of use to a football training centre involving security fencing and laying out as an ecological area.

#### **Applicant Name & Address:**

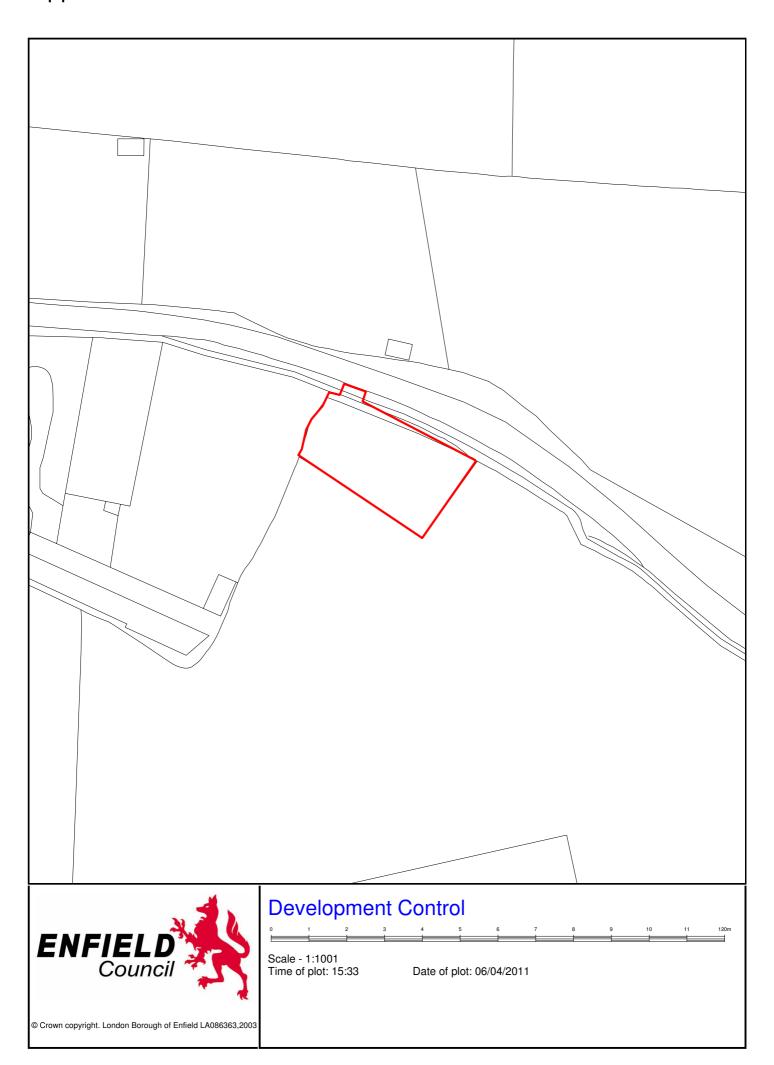
Tottenham Hotspur Football & Athletic Co SPORTS GROUND, WHITEWEBBS LANE, ENFIELD, EN2 9HH

# **Agent Name & Address:**

Samuel Stafford, Savills Ground Floor City Point Leeds LS1 2HL

**RECOMMENDATION:** That planning permission be granted subject to conditions

# Application No:- TP/10/1761



#### 1. Site and Surroundings

- 1.1 The application site comprises of 0.07 hectares of land at the northern edge the Tottenham Hotspurs Football Training Grounds, which is currently being developed.
- 1.2 The site comprises the former Invicta Cricket Ground and is bounded by Whitewebbs Lane to the north. In addition, the application site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt but does not fall part of Forty Hall and Bulls Cross Conservation Area. Moreover, the site does not contain any trees covered by a tree protection order.

## 2. Proposal

- 2.1 Permission is sought to permit the enlargement of the approved training facility to enable additional youth pitches to be provided. This involves changing the use of the current cricket ground and part of the ecological zone (1,565sqm) approved under reference TP/07/1623 which is located along the eastern boundary of the former Invicta Cricket Club site. Re-provision would be in the form of land bounded by Whitewebbs Lane to the north and the northern boundary of the previously approved ecological zone. This replacement area equates to approximately 2,529sqm.
- 2.4 The proposal also involves the removal of the hedgerow which forms the eastern edge of the cricket ground together with the loss of hedgerow which was proposed as replacement and which was to be delivered as part of the main training centre proposals. The combined loss of hedgerow (both existing (118m) and originally proposed (85m) equates to 203m. However, the current proposals involve the provision of 274m of new hedgerow planting using native species: an increase of 71 metres.
- 2.5 A 2m high steel post and rail fence will be erected along the northern boundary of the site fronting Whitewebbs Lane. In addition, a 2.4m high timber fence is proposed along the eastern and southern boundary of the stables to screen the stables and a 2m high weld mesh fencing is proposed running west from the stables.

#### 3. Relevant Planning Decisions

- 3.1 TP/07/1623 Construction of a football training centre comprising a building incorporating training and associated facilities, ancillary buildings and plant, external pitches, access roads, parking, pathways, fences and external lighting approved in April 2008.
- 3.2 TP/07/1623/DP5 Details of Ecological Management Plan and Ecological Construction Method Statement submitted pursuant to condition 15 of approval under Ref:TP/07/1623 for construction of a football training centre approved September 2008.
- 3.3 TP/09/1658 Construction of a football training centre comprising a building incorporating training and associated facilities. (Amended design of approved scheme under Ref:TP/07/1623) approved in January 2009.

#### 4. Consultations

#### 4.1 Statutory and non-statutory consultees

#### 4.1.2 The Arboricultural Officer comments that:

- The proposal to remove the central hedge and re-instate native planting areas primarily in the ecological zone and derelict hedgerow on the southern boundary are satisfactory.
- The hedge designated for removal has been unmanaged for many years, it is not an original field hedge and mainly consists of poor quality semi-mature oak trees interspersed with poor quality hawthorn / blackthorn stands.
- The removal of the hedge will not be detrimental to the site and the new plantings will be a great improvement in terms of species diversity and wildlife.
- The two oaks on the southern boundary which were originally to be retained have been removed under advice, due to them being in a very poor condition and limited safe useful life expectancy. The entire south boundary is to be replanted with native trees and therefore easily compensates for any tree loss.
- Only concern is the planting of a Cherry Laurel hedge along the northwest boundary as this is an alien species.
- 4.1.3 Natural England comment that they remain unsatisfied with the Ecological Survey (2010) as it was conducted during a sub-optimal period for species and habitats. In addition, they are of the opinion that it is unclear as to the level of impact of the tree removal and / or hedge removal on protected species such as bats. They also comment that the ecology zone created as part of the initial proposal will be relocated, with mitigation proposed and that this represents a retrograde step in terms of removing and negating the habitat creation work that has previously been undertaken. It is also unclear what the zone will consist of. Mitigation for the loss of the hedgerow and the relocation of the ecological zone need to be clearly outlined in an Ecological Management and Maintenance Plan.

# 4.2 Public

No consultation letters were needed in connection with this proposal although the Crews Hill Residents Association was notified. No replies have been received and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

#### 5. Relevant Policy

#### 5.1 Local Development Framework

At the meeting of the full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010, the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework was approved. The document and the policies contained therein, are now material considerations to be taken into account when considering the acceptability of development proposals. The following are of relevance:

CP30: Maintaining and improving the quality of the built and open

environment

CP31: Built and landscape heritage CP33: Green Belt and countryside

CP34: Parks, playing fields and other open spaces

CP36: Biodiversity

#### 5.2 Saved UDP Policies

After the adoption of the Core Strategy, a number of UDP policies are retained as material considerations pending the emergence of new and updates policies and development standards within the Development Management Document. The following are of relevance

(II)G21 Reducing the visual intrusion of the built up area

(II)GD3 Aesthetics and functional design

(II)GD6 Traffic

(II)GD8 Site access and servicing

## 5.3 The London Plan

Policy 2A.1 Sustainability criteria

Policy 3D.9 Green Belt

Policy 3D.14 Biodiversity and nature conservation

Policy 4A.1 Tackling climate change Policy 4A.2 Mitigating climate change

Policy 4B.3 Enhancing the quality of the public realm

Policy 4B.5 Creating an inclusive environment Policy 4B.8 Respect local context and communities

Policy 4B.12 Heritage conservation Policy 4C.4 Natural landscape

#### 5.4 Other Relevant Policy

PPS1: Sustainable development

PPG2: Green Belts

PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPG13: Transport

PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

#### 6. Analysis

#### 6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 There are five purposes for including land in the Green Belt (para.1.5 PPG2). These are:
  - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
  - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 6.1.2 In addition, the following objectives are provided at paragraph 1.6 of PPG2, in terms of land use:

- to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas:
- to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- to secure nature conservation interest; and
- to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.
- 6.1.3 It should be noted however, that the purposes of including land within the Green Belt is of "paramount importance" to its continued protection and outweigh the land use objectives.

#### 6.2 <u>Impact on Green Belt</u>

- 6.2.1 The proposed development will not come into conflict with any of the identified purposes for including land within the Green Belt. In addition, in terms of land use, the proposal is considered to enhance the landscape and will further secure nature conservation through an enlarged ecological zone.
- 6.2.2 Fencing along Whitewebbs Lane has been previously approved under reference TP/07/1623.

#### 6.3 Loss of Existing Cricket Club

6.3.1 The loss of an existing facility such as this would normally be resisted. However, in this case the facility, previously occupied by the Invicta Club, is now vacant and is not used. It is recognised that the proposal is not a like for like replacement but it is considered to represent albeit, through a different sporting medium, an adequate compensation for this loss of the existing facility

#### 6.3.2 Ecological Impact

- 6.3.1 An existing hedge, at the eastern boundary of the former cricket field has been removed in order to allow for the opening up and linking of the former cricket field with the already approved training pitches. The hedge is not protected as it does not fulfil the criteria of an "important" hedgerow as defined in the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. This is because of it being dominated by a small number of woody species and the lack of additional features of note, such as connectivity to other hedgerows or woodland, association with banks and ditches, presence of parallel hedgerows or frequency of standard mature trees. The loss of this hedgerow however, will be compensated for by the planting of a new 274m hedgerow of native species.
- 6.3.2 In addition, the grassland present over the surface of the cricket ground is of no apparent ecological note, being dominated by a small number of common species such as perennial rye-grass, Yorkshire fog and annual meadow grass.

- 6.3.4 The management of the ecological zone will be in accordance with the recommendations in the ecological zone on the adjacent site, which was approved under reference TP/07/1623.
- 6.3.5 The ecological report confirms that due to the type and quality of habitats present, there is limited scope for protected species such as bats, slowworm and breeding birds to be present. Moreover, in respect of the cricket ground, the ecological report confirmed that it supported no habitats of particular note. However, in relation to bats, the ecological report confirms that the removal of the eastern hedgerow is likely to alter locally foraging and commuting behaviour but that the proposals will provide new foraging and commuting opportunities and maintain connectivity at a site level particularly through the provision and management of new hedgerow planting.
- 6.3.7 The potential of the vegetation to support breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young has also been considered and it is recommended that any works to remove such vegetation will be completed outside the bird breeding period (September to February, inclusive) unless a breeding bird survey by a suitably qualified person confirms that no breeding birds, active nests, eggs or dependent young are present immediately prior to the works commencing. Precautionary measures are also advocated for slowworm.
- 6.3.9 It is considered that due to the proposed replacement hedgerow, the enlarged ecological zone, and subject to suitable conditions being imposed, the development will not adversely affect the ecological value of the site.

#### 6.4 Traffic & Transportation

- 6.4.1 As a result of the proposals, the existing access into Wellington Place, off Whitewebbs Lane, will be closed. Access into Wellington Place will therefore be from within the larger site via the main site access from Whitewebbs Lane. A condition is suggested requiring the reinstatement of the kerb.
- 6.4.2 The proposed development does not raise any wider issues in terms of vehicle and pedestrian safety as the use would not in itself, increase traffic generation or vehicle movements.. Moreover, the boundary fencing which lies adjacent to the highways is such that it would not prejudice sightlines or highway safety.

## 6.5 Other matters

- 6.5.1 The comments from Natural England have been noted, however it is considered that the sufficient information has been provided in order for the Local Planning Authority to make an informed assessment. Moreover, the ecological zone will be managed in accordance with the approved Ecological Management Plan (EMP) for the approved training facility.
- 6.5.2 Whilst the surveys were not conducted during the optimum period, the quality of the hedgerow has been properly assessed, as discussed in section 6.3.5 of this report, and identified as having limited scope for protected species. Moreover, the removal of the hedgerow and the two oak trees were undertaken at times when there would be no nesting birds present.

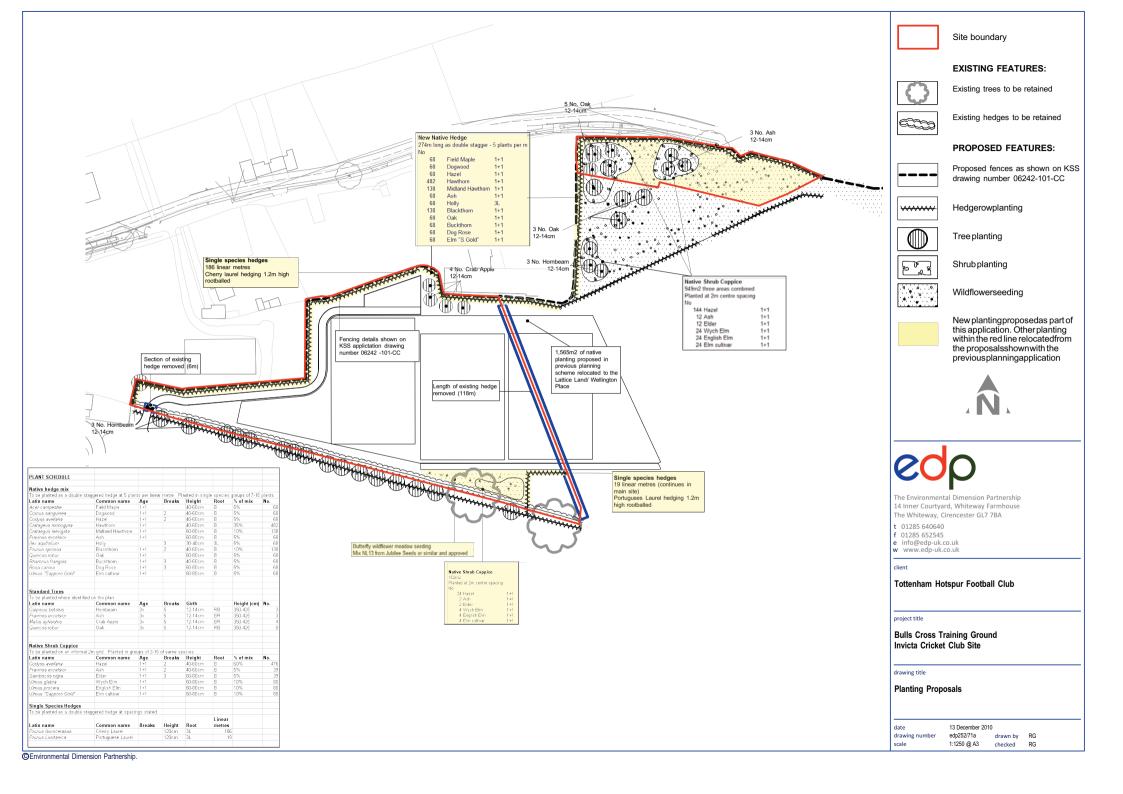
6.5.3 The relocation of part of the previously approved ecological zone is not considered a 'retrograde step' as this area has not yet been planted out. Moreover, the planting that has taken place within the part of the retained ecological zone is only newly planted.

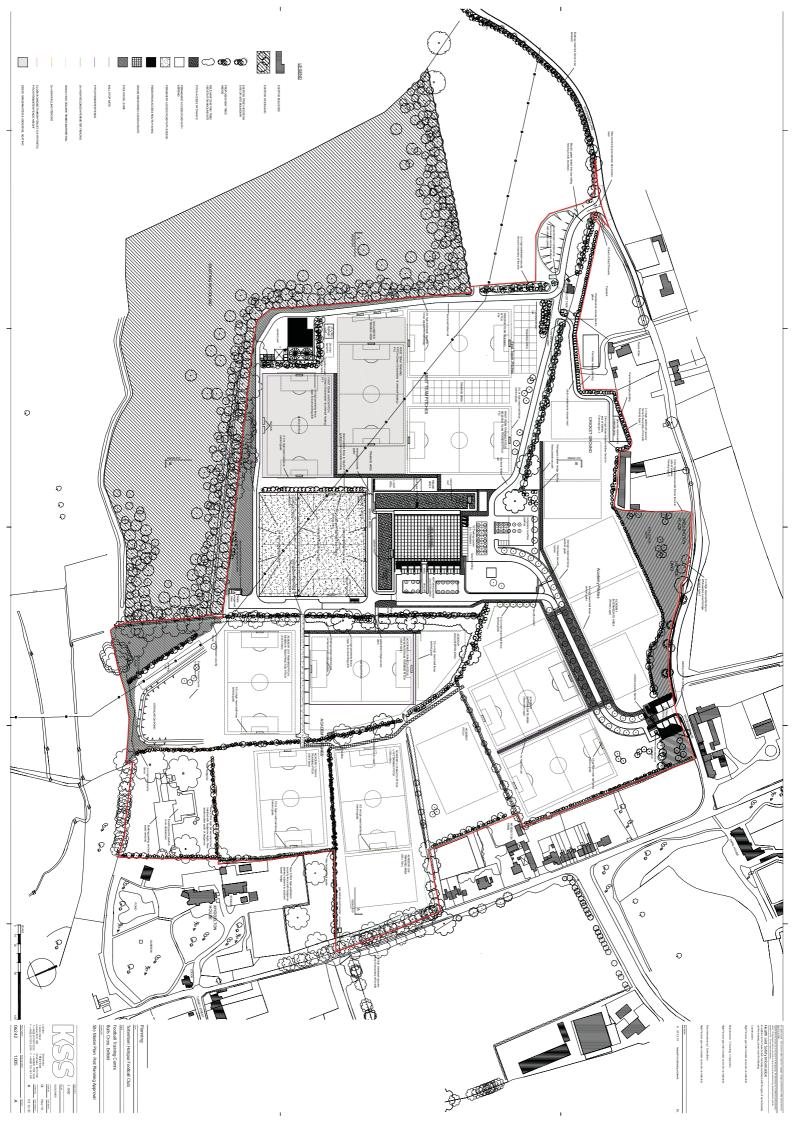
#### 7. Conclusion

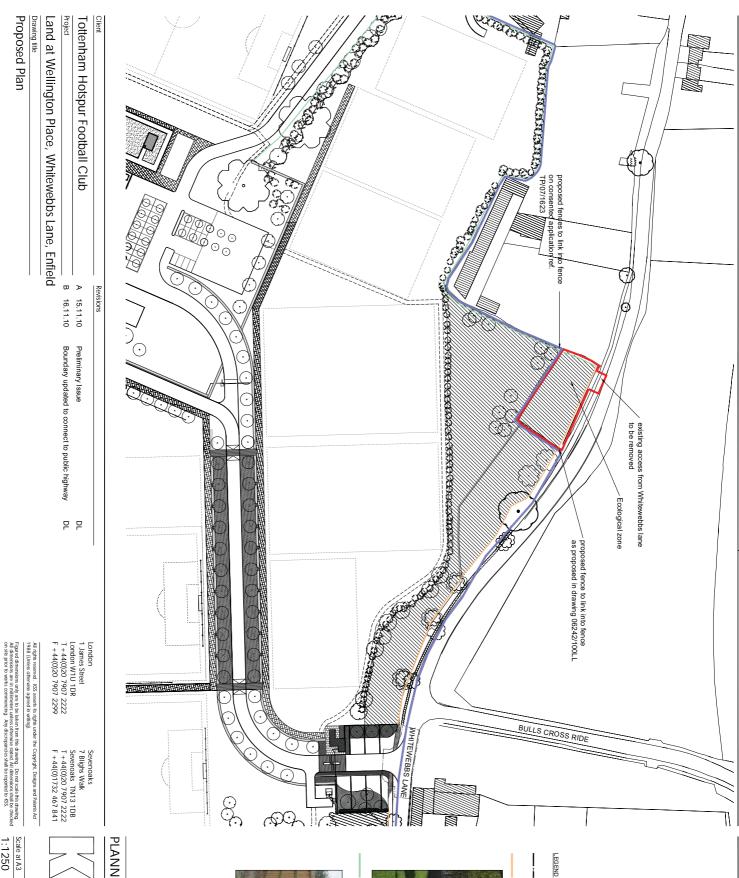
- 7.1 The proposed development is considered to enhance the ecological value of the site and would not be in conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Furthermore, it is considered the proposal would sympathetically relate to the natural and open character of the surrounding area taking into account the approved training facility.
- 7.2 It is therefore considered that on balance, planning permission should be granted for the following reasons:
  - 1. The proposed change of use would have no significant visual impact on the open character and amenity of the Green Belt having regard to Core Policy 33 of the Core Strategy, Policy (II)G21of the Unitary Development Plan Belt, Policy 3D.9 of The London Plan and PPG2: Green Belts.
  - The proposed development improves the ecological value of the site. It is considered that the proposed development complies with Core Policy 36 of the Core Strategy, Policies 3D.14 and 4C.4 of The London Plan, and with PPS1: Sustainable Development, and PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.
  - 3. The proposed fencing, having regard to its design, size and siting, will not give rise to conditions prejudicial to the free flow and safety of traffic on the adjoining highways, having regard to Policies (II)GD6 and (II)GD8 of the Unitary Development Plan and with PPG13: Transport.

#### 8. Recommendation

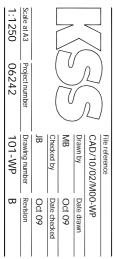
- 8.1 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:
  - 1. C60 Drawing Numbers
  - 2. C17 Landscaping (as per EMP)
  - 3. C51A Time limited permission







PROPOSED FENCE TYPE 2 (timber close board fence - Height 2m)



PLANNING	
File reference	
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