



## Report to East Area Planning Committee

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<b>Application Number:</b>	PL/22/1319/FA
<b>Proposal:</b>	Installation of running track on the school field
<b>Site location:</b>	Woodside Junior School, Mitchell Walk, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP6 6NW
<b>Applicant:</b>	Woodside Junior School
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Alex Wilson
<b>Ward affected:</b>	Amersham and Chesham Bois
<b>Parish-Town Council:</b>	Amersham
<b>Valid date:</b>	6 May 2022
<b>Determination date:</b>	5 August 2022
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Conditional permission

### 1.0 Summary & Recommendation/ Reason for Planning Committee Consideration

- 1.1 This application seeks permission for the installation of a running trail on the school field. The site is located within the built-up area of Amersham and the main school building is Grade II listed.
- 1.2 The application is before the Planning Committee as the site is Council owned land. As such, the application should be determined by the Planning Committee, as per the procedures of the Constitution.
- 1.3 The recommendation is to grant **conditional permission**.

### 2.0 Description of Proposed Development

- 2.1 This application proposes the installation of a running trail around the perimeter of the school field, measuring a total length of 375 metres and with a path width of 1.2 metres. The track has been amended since the initial submission of the application and now proposes a 'daily running track', being located close to the edges of the school field, to the south eastern side of the main school building.
- 2.2 The application is accompanied by:
  - a) A Design and Access Statement;

- b) Two follow-up statements by the School in respect to the consultation responses by Sport England.
- 2.3 As aforementioned, amended plans have been submitted during the course of this application, following initial objections raised by Sport England. The circular multiple running lane track has been altered to now be a running trail around the edges of the school field. All other details include site area remain the same.

### **3.0 Relevant Planning History**

- 3.1 There is extensive history associated with this site, as such the following most recent planning history has been listed below:
- 3.2 AM/98/56 – circa. 1956 – School Building – Granted Permission
- 3.3 CH/2015/2264/FA - 23.02.2016 - Construction of two playground areas within school curtilage - Conditional Permission
- 3.4 CH/2015/1161/HB - 10.02.2016 - Replacement external windows and doors - Conditional Consent
- 3.5 PL/22/1410/SA - Certificate of Lawfulness for proposed reopening access from Plantation Road, renewal of the existing pavement facing gate, renewal of hardstanding of tracking leading to Plantation Road, widening of emergency track to 4 metres in width, installation of 4 metre wide double leaf gate and 1.2 metre wide single leaf gate (for pedestrian access) – Under consideration at the time of drafting this report.

### **4.0 Summary of Representations**

- 4.1 Two letters of objection have been received - main points summarised below:
- Significant increase in facilities has resulted in additional parking and congestion problems within Mitchell Walk, no allocated coach parking
  - New parking restrictions has had little effect on the congestion as they are not enforced
  - Increase in congestion, extended periods of inconvenience for residents
  - Extending the accessibility hours will provide additional nuisance to all the residents
  - Illustration submitted does not represent the true scale of the proposal, misleading information
  - Concerns regarding how a football pitch would fit within the track, no information from local community/local clubs to support proposal
  - Increase of noise from crowds

### **5.0 Policy Considerations and Evaluation**

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021
- National Design Guidance, October 2019

- Core Strategy for Chiltern District - Adopted November 2011
- Chiltern District Local Plan adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001), consolidated September 2007 and November 2011
- Chiltern and South Bucks Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule

### **Principle and Location of Development**

Core Strategy Policies:

CS1 (The spatial strategy),

Local Plan Saved Policies:

GC1 (Design of development)

- 5.1 The application relates to the grounds surrounding a Listed Building located on Mitchell Walk, a residential area north east of Woodside Road in Amersham-on-the-Hill. Woodside Junior School is neighboured by properties on the north east and south west boundary on Mitchell Walk and to the rear of the school's sports field by properties on Plantation Road.
- 5.2 Whilst the application site hosts a Listed Building, works to the existing Listed Building are not proposed as part of this application. Modest development to community facilities are generally acceptable, subject to complying with relevant Development Plan Policies.

### **Transport matters and parking**

Core Strategy Policies:

CS25 (Dealing with the impact of new development on the transport network)

CS26 (Requirements of new development)

Buckinghamshire Parking Guidance September 2015

- 5.3 The running trail has no highway or parking implications. Outside of school hours, the car park would be free for members of the public to use. The Highways Officer raises no objection to the proposal and no conditions are required.

### **Raising the quality of place making and design**

Core Strategy Policies:

CS4 (Ensuring that the development is sustainable)

CS20 (Design and environmental quality)

CS29 (Community)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

GC1 (Design of development)

GC4 (Landscaping)

- 5.4 Local Plan Policy GC1 refers to the design and appearance of the development and requires all proposals to be assessed with regard to the scale of development, height, siting and relationship with adjoining boundaries and highway, car parking, materials, form, detailing of building work in sensitive locations and design against crime.

- 5.5 It is not considered that the running track would be overly prominent in its appearance, being sited close along the perimeter covering a relatively small section of the school field. As such, it would not cause a detrimental impact upon the character of the area. This is notwithstanding the impact upon the main listed school building and associated listed paraphernalia, of which will be assessed within the 'Historic environment' section of this report.

### **Amenity of existing and future residents**

Local Plan Saved Policies:

GC3 (Protection of amenities)

- 5.6 Local Plan Policy GC3 seeks to protect amenities throughout the area. It states that in considering proposals for development, the Council will seek to achieve good standards of amenity for the future occupiers of that development and to protect the amenities enjoyed by the occupants of existing adjoining and neighbouring properties. Where amenities are impaired to a significant degree, planning permission will be refused.
- 5.7 The site is already a playing field for the school and hosts activities relating to sport and physical exercise. It is already used on a daily basis with access available to the entirety of the grounds for outdoor activities by the school's pupils. Given the size, siting and design of the proposed running track and its relationship to adjoining neighbouring properties, it is considered that it would not have an adverse impact on the amenities, including noise, of the occupiers of any neighbouring residential property compared to the existing use of the school field. Therefore, there are no concerns raised regarding residential amenities.

### **Ecology**

Core Strategy Policies:

CS4 (Ensuring that development is sustainable)

CS24 (Biodiversity)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

NC1 (Safeguarding of nature conservation interests)

- 5.8 The Ecology Officer has been consulted as part of this application, citing no objections to the proposal. Following their recommendation for biodiversity enhancements, the School has subsequently installed bat and bird boxes located to trees along the southern perimeter of the field.

### **Community facilities**

Core Strategy Policies:

CS4 (Ensuring that development is sustainable)

CS27 (Working for a healthier community)

CS28 (Retaining and improving leisure and recreational facilities)

CS29 (Community)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

CSF1 (Provision of community services and facilities in the built-up areas excluded from the Green Belt)

R2 (Loss Of Existing Sports Facilities)

- 5.9 Policies CS28 and CS29 of the Core Strategy are relevant with regard to the current proposal. Policy CS28 relates to leisure and recreational facilities and sets out that where a need for new facilities is identified the Council will work with partners to find ways of delivering these improvements. Policy CS29 relates to community facilities and states that the Council strategy is to encourage the provision of community facilities in areas where there is an identified need and also details that an option would be to consider policy exceptions to encourage such facilities to be provided.
- 5.10 Sport England has been consulted as part of this application, wherein there was an initial holding objection raised in respect to the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field and the resulting impact on its potential to be used for outdoor sport. Following this, amended plans have been received showing a relocated track, in the form of a trail, sited closer to the perimeters of the field and has been reduced to, in effect, one lane, only being 1.2m in width. Based on this, Sport England has now confirmed that they withdraw the objection as the revised proposal is considered to protect the main playing field area and the pitches within it as a result of the track being located around the perimeter of the field. As such, no objections or concerns are raised in this respect.

#### **Historic environment (or Conservation Area or Listed Building Issues)**

Core Strategy Policies:

CS4 (Ensuring that development is sustainable)

Local Plan Saved Policies:

LB1 (Protection of special architectural or historic interest of Listed Buildings)

LB2 (Protection of setting of Listed Buildings)

- 5.11 Woodside Junior School is a designated heritage asset, being a Grade II listed building. Furthermore, the seat, steps, pool surround and attached pergola, are also Grade II listed. Given the nature of the proposed trail, it would not cause harm to the setting of the special historic and architectural interest of the Grade II Listed Building.
- 5.12 The Historic Buildings Officer has confirmed that no objections are raised, in respect to the impact upon the listed building and associated paraphernalia and their setting, considering the school and its existing playground equipment and landscape features. Two conditions should be applied, including a sample of the colour finish of the track to be approved and details of landscaping design regarding the excavated soil to form the graded and seeded mound, in order to ensure to minimise any harm to the setting.

#### **6.0 Weighing and balancing of issues / Overall Assessment**

- 6.1 This section brings together the assessment that has so far been set out in order to weigh and balance relevant planning considerations in order to reach a conclusion on the application.
- 6.2 In determining the planning application, section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate

otherwise. In addition, Section 143 of the Localism Act amends Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act relating to the determination of planning applications and states that in dealing with planning applications, the authority shall have regard to:

- a. Provision of the development plan insofar as they are material,
- b. Any local finance considerations, so far as they are material to the application (such as CIL if applicable), and,
- c. Any other material considerations. In this respect, it should be noted that paragraph 95 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to school development proposals and should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through any related decisions on applications.

6.3 As set out above it is considered that, the proposed development would accord with the development plan policies and other material considerations.

6.4 Local Planning Authorities, when making decisions of a strategic nature, must have due regard, through the Equalities Act, to reducing the inequalities which may result from socio-economic disadvantage. In this instance, it is not considered that this proposal would disadvantage any sector of society to a harmful extent.

## **7.0 Working with the applicant / agent**

7.1 In accordance with paragraph 38 of the NPPF (2019) the Council approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments.

7.2 The Council works with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application. In this case, the applicant was informed of the Council's concerns, in respect to an initial holding objection raised Sport England, and how this could be overcome. The applicant responded by submitting amended plans, which were considered to be acceptable and the proposal is recommended for conditional permission.

## **8.0 Recommendation: Conditional Permission** subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
Reason: To prevent the accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions, to enable the Local Planning Authority to review the suitability of the development in the light of altered circumstances and to comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, as amended.
2. Before the surface of the running track hereby permitted is installed, a sample of the material and colour finish of the track shall be submitted to and approved in writing

by the local planning authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with these approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building in accordance with policy LB1 of The Chiltern Local Plan Adopted 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) Consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, policy CS4 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District, Adopted November 2011, the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

3. Before the surface of the running track hereby permitted is installed, details of landscaping design regarding the excavated soil and any formation of a graded and seeded mound(s), including cross sections as appropriate, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with these approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building in accordance with policy LB1 of The Chiltern Local Plan Adopted 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) Consolidated September 2007 and November 2011, policy CS4 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District, Adopted November 2011, the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4. The bat and bird boxes installed on site and as detailed in the letter from the school, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022, shall be retained in situ.

Reason: To ensure biodiversity enhancements within the site.

5. This permission relates to the details shown on the approved plans as listed below:

**List of approved plans:**

<u>Received</u>	<u>Plan Reference</u>
20 Jun 2022	Daily Mile Running Track
06 May 2022	Location Plan

**INFORMATIVE(S)**

1. The Council is the Charging Authority for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL is a charge on development; it is tariff-based and enables local authorities to raise funds to pay for infrastructure.  
If you have received a CIL Liability Notice, this Notice will set out the further requirements that need to be complied with.  
If you have not received a CIL Liability Notice, the development may still be liable for CIL. Before development is commenced, for further information please refer to the following website <https://www.chiltern.gov.uk/CIL-implementation> or contact 01494 732792 for more information.

## **APPENDIX A: Consultation Responses and Representations**

### Councillor Comments

*Not applicable.*

### Town Council Comments

Amersham Town Council (Received 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022):

‘Members had no objection and commented that they were highly in favour of the running track potentially being for community use also. They added however that they would refer to Buckinghamshire Council’s Highways department regarding potential traffic and parking issues. Some members commented that no vehicular access should be granted via Plantation Road at a later date.’

### Consultation Responses

**Senior Highways Development Management Officer (received 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022):**

‘Mitchell Walk is an unclassified road, which in this location is subject to a speed limit of 30mph. Proposals include the installation of a 200m running track on the school field.

When considering trip generation, I note that the running track is predominantly to be used by pupils during school hours, however it is also proposed to be rented out to local sports groups after school hours. As such, I consider that the site would be subject to an intensification in use. As this is the case, the access arrangements serving the site will need to be assessed in order to determine its suitability to accommodate an intensified use.

As Mitchell Walk is subject to a speed restriction of 30mph, visibility splays of 30mph are applicable, commensurate with current Manual for Streets guidance. I can confirm that these splays are achievable from the access points.

In terms of parking provision, I note that the Countywide Parking Guidance does not have any specified standards for running tracks. I also note that outside of school hours, the car park would be free for members of the public to use.

Mindful of the above, I have no objection to the proposals, and in this instance I have no conditions to suggest for inclusion on any planning consent that you may grant.’

**Historic Buildings Officer (received 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022):**

### Summary

The application is acceptable in heritage terms

### Heritage Assets

In the setting of Listed buildings:

- Woodside Junior School designated heritage assets grade II listed building.
- Woodside School seat, steps, pool surround and attached pergola, is also grade II listed

### Relevant planning history



CH/2015/2264/FA - Construction of two playground areas within the school curtilage conditional consent.

CH/2012/0989/HB Removal of window and insertion of door – Conditional consent.

CH/2012/1272/HB Erection of freestanding external canopy – Conditional consent.

CH/2012 Removal of windows and insertion of door - Conditional consent.

### Discussion

Site visit – 26/05/2022

#### Considerations

The heritage assessment is the impact on the setting of the special historic and architectural interest of the Grade II Listed Building.

#### Proposal

The proposal has been amended due to concerns shown by Sport England. The proposal is now to locate the running track around the perimeter of the playing field, preserving a greater amount of playing field land.

#### Significance

The proposed development is the playing fields within the grounds of Woodside school, which has two separate designations; school building and pond/seating/pergola area. They were both listed in 1993.

Woodside School was designed in 1956-57 by Mary and David Medd of Ministry of Education and was the first true 'rationalised traditional' school built as a prototype. They believed in good natural light and ventilation and advocated areas for messy activities, quiet study or group teaching.

Along with the school the rear steps, pool surround and attached pergola were also designated. They form an important visual feature in the rear courtyard.

### Discussion

- Running Track

The original proposal was for a 4 lane running track on the school field to enable all year round use. In response to the concerns highlighted by Sport England plans have changed for a perimeter track.

The newly proposed track would consist of one lane 1.2m wide, supplied by the same manufacturers, Novasport. The finish will be different from the original running track. The proposed surface is composed of rubber granules, coloured aggregate and a polyurethane binder. As stated in the original consult the school has a variety of playgrounds and parking areas around the school finished in tarmac and bonded rubber mulch. The new colour of the surface is unknown.

Considering the school and its existing playground equipment and landscape features it is felt the proposed running track would not appear unduly prominent, and therefore would

not adversely impact on the setting of the listed buildings. Furthermore, the proposed use of the proposed track is considered to be in keeping with the current use of the listed building (school).

- Landscaping

No landscaping designs have been supplied, it is assumed from the original DAS says that the excavated soil will be used to build a graded and seeded mound.

#### Heritage Policy Assessment

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The proposals would preserve the architectural and historic interest of the listed building and therefore complies with sections 66 of the Act.

#### NPPF

The proposal would cause no harm to the significance of the heritage asset and satisfy the planning guidance in paras 193-197 of the NPPF, whereby the conservation of the heritage asset is the foremost consideration in determining applications and informing planning decisions.

#### Chiltern Local Plan Policy LB1 & LB2

Regard was made to the listed building's setting and its contribution to the local scene.

#### Conclusion

For the reasons given above it is felt that in heritage terms:

The application would not raise any heritage objection subject to the following conditions:

- Sample of the colour finish to be approved of the track to ensure to minimise any harm to the setting
- Details of landscaping design regarding the excavated soil building the graded and seeded mound.'

#### **Sport England Planning Manager**

##### **First response - received 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022:**

Thank you for the further information from the school dated 26 May in relation to the proposed 200m running track on the school field. Sport England notes that there is no community use of the existing football pitches, and we further note the information in relation to potential community use of the track by local running and athletics groups/clubs.

Sport England has consulted the governing bodies for sport and we have received the following comments. England Athletics (EA) comments that they are supportive of the proposal as it fits with their strategy of providing innovative athletics facilities in areas of demand. EA go on to comment that if Football have objections to the scheme then EA would be happy to look at other alternatives (e.g. a freeform perimeter daily mile loop that could potentially avoid any loss of PP provision). Also, for out of hours community use for athletics has floodlighting/low level lighting been considered?

Sport England has not received any comments from the Football Foundation or the FA. Sport England notes that the further information provided by the school refers to the use of the playing field for football including for matches and an after school club, as well as for other sports including hockey; athletics and field events; tennis and rounders.

Sport England considers that the constraints put on the playing field by the installation of the track will limit the ability of the playing field to be used to accommodate these other sports and multiple pitch layouts. Sport England further considers that without sports lighting the proposed track will offer limited opportunities for community use. We consider that more can be done to minimise the impact on the playing field area and seek to retain a greater amount of space which can be used for sports pitches. There is potential for laying out the track closer to the perimeter. We are aware that EA have offered to help with the design and layout of the track, eg a freeform loop.

On that basis, Sport England does not consider that the benefits to sport outweigh the harm caused by the loss of playing field as required by our E5 exception. Sport England is therefore unable to support the proposal as it stands and we would need to see modifications to the design and layout of the track which better preserves the principal playing field area to accommodate and support the use of the site for pitch sports. We believe that more can be done to reduce the impact and that support may be available from the EA to address these concerns.

Sport England therefore wishes to maintain its objection.

Should the local planning authority be minded to grant planning permission for the proposal, contrary to Sport England's holding objection, then in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, the application should be referred to the Secretary of State, via the Planning Casework Unit.'

**Second response - received 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022:**

'Thank you for the amended plan. Based on this, Sport England is content to withdraw the objection to the application, as the revised proposal is considered to better protect the principal playing field area and the pitches within it as a result of the track being located around the perimeter of the playing field.

The application is therefore considered capable of meeting our E5 exception:

'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.'

I hope that clarifies our position.'

**Ecology Officer (received 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022):**

'I viewed the plans for this application and there are no ecological concerns.

The proposed running track will be in the school's amenity grassland and no trees will be impacted on.

As a biodiversity enhancement the installation of bat and bird boxes is recommended and can be secured via condition.'

**Ecology Officer (received 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022):**

'I viewed the letter (Woodside Junior School, 02/06/2022) detailing the installation of bat and bird boxes and the information provided is sufficient.

A condition relating to biodiversity features is no longer required as biodiversity features were installed prior to determination of the application.'

Representations

Two third party letters of objection have been received – although these were in relation to the initial submission for a more formal and “traditional” oval-shaped running track on the playing field. Main points summarised below:

- Significant increase in facilities has resulted in additional parking and congestion problems within Mitchell Walk, no allocated coach parking
- New parking restrictions has had little effect on the congestion as they are not enforced
- Increase in congestion, extended periods of inconvenience for residents
- Extending the accessibility hours will provide additional nuisance to all the residents
- Illustration submitted does not represent the true scale of the proposal, misleading information
- Concerns regarding how a football pitch would fit within the track, no information from local community/local clubs to support proposal
- Increase of noise from crowds