

PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

APPLICATIONS UNDER VARIOUS ACTS / REGULATIONS – SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

1. **Application Number:** 20/00159/FUL
- Address:** Hallam Sports Club, Sandygate Road

Updated Ecology Comments:

Following concerns raised by some objectors, a data search of the Sheffield Biological Records Centre and a site visit were undertaken.

- The data search centered on the sports ground and used a 1 km radius. It revealed a small number of records for the Redmires Road area but no records of roosting bats in the sports ground or the immediate area.
- The site visit was made by a Sheffield City Council Biodiversity Officer and an Associate Ecologist (who holds a Natural England Bat Licence No. 2015-15405-CLS-CLS). They carried out a Preliminary Roost Assessment of the trees identified for removal and confirmed that the largest, a multi-stemmed sycamore with ivy growth, does not offer any potential roost features as is too young to have the bark flakes, rot holes or other defects used by bats. The ivy around the tree is not mature enough to form thick stemmed overlapping growth, which creates crevices that bats can exploit for roosting, and the ivy foliage extends almost all the way down the trunk of the tree making it difficult for bats to approach the trunk. The other trees along Sandygate Road are young trees that do not possess features that could be used by bats.
- In relation to the netting it was confirmed that, based on an assessment of the site and the surrounding area, the trees and the location of the nets, the proposals will not obstruct commuting bats or their foraging routes. Bats can locate prey approximately 1mm in size so they can detect and avoid a net with a cord size above that.
- Regarding the law, paragraph 99 of Government Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System states that:

It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before planning permission is granted, ...' but that 'developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development.'

In this instance there is no reasonable likelihood of bats using the 4 immature trees to be felled as roost sites.

The Council's Ecologists do not believe that the proposed sports nets will harm bats, cause obstruction to commuting routes or in any way negatively affect the conservation status of bats in this area.

Additional Representation

8 further representations have been received, 2 in support and 6 objecting to the proposed development. Some of the points raised are covered in the report to committee and are not repeated here. The additional comments include:

In support of the application:

- Streetscapes evolve over time, adapting to needs.
- Today's 'blame-culture' and litigious society forces action to prevent opportunistic legal challenges.
- 'Acceptable risks' are no longer seen as such, therefore seemingly disproportionate measures are required to protect the health and safety of all.

Objecting to the application:

- The public benefits referred to in officer report are overstated.
- The Labosport report only measures the theoretical risk of ball escape.
- The Premier League Management Board advised the club in 2019 to make a record of every ball struck out of the ground – there is no evidence that the club has collected such data.
- Since the 1st and 2nd teams moved to Crimicar Lane the percentage of 6s hit has reduced to 0.42% in 2019 and 0.36% in 2020 - sufficiently low to not warrant mitigation.
- Only 1-2 matches a week would require netting. A condition should require removal of netting after adult matches.
- Alternatives have not been explored, such as the reorientation of the pitch which would shorten the shortest boundary by 6m.
- Castle Dyke is referred to as potential viable alternative within League Management Committee notes.
- Labosport Report references central 5 wickets, whereas the proposal is for 6 – Guidance for 6 wickets relates to teams in the Premier League and is not relevant unless the 1st team is returning.

- If demountable columns are not possible, the colour should be considered.
- It is argued that there will be more than glimpsed views of the netting from the Conservation Area.

- There is video evidence and written statements of bats flying over the cricket pitch.
- Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife recommended a bat survey, stated that bats do get caught in netting and confirmed that ivy is a known feature of interest to bats.

- Revised plans use simplified crowns giving a false impression of the trees in north-west corner.
- Significant portions of the canopy of the now protected trees will need to be removed.
- The Sheffield Waterworks Cricket Club regularly play on Wednesdays at Crimicar Lane and are likely to be the midweek team at Sandygate once the netting is up. This team includes 1st and 2nd team players from Hallam CC.
- A condition is required to restrict Sandygate to community level cricket.

In Response:

Hallam Cricket Club were informed by the ECB, cricket's national governing body, that the good practice approach to addressing ball escape is to commission a report from Labosport and follow its guidance. Other approaches leave the club vulnerable if another incident occurs as a result of a ball being hit out of the ground.

The number of sixes struck has reduced since the 1st and 2nd teams moved to Crimicar Lane, but the reduction in sixes not a sound basis for a risk assessment. The figures do not, for instance, include an estimate of how high the ball was each time it passed over the wall or where on the square the match was being played. They don't account for there being no midweek games this year, or the shortage of wickets after part of the square was re-laid and took some time to bed in.

Almost all the under 18s and many of the under 15s play for adult teams at weekends and can hit the ball a long way.

Sandygate has been the home ground for the University's teams for some years. Their fixtures do not appear on Hallam's website as they are not club games.

The netting will be designed to be structurally safe. The club have confirmed that they will lower it in periods of high wind if that is required.

There is no plan to return 'professional' cricket to Sandygate.

The club say that the standard of their midweek league team is very much 'community' and not 'professional', despite the participation of some 1st and 2nd team players. The games are short and focus more on fun than the more competitive games at the weekend.

Rotating the direction of play was considered but ruled out because the slope, which would then run in the direction of play, is excessive and because the square would have to be re-laid to provide a safe surface, rendering the ground unusable for up to two seasons.

The club confirmed that Castle Dyke is a school ground that they hire at considerable cost for some home games but the surface is poor.

After allowing for the significant slope across the ground, the proposed netting provides protection in line with the table of distances in the Labosport report for six wickets. These are the only wickets which will be used for adult games. The remaining four wickets will be marked out at shorter lengths for junior games. The recommendations in the Labosport report do not eliminate risk but they do reduce it to a level which the acknowledged experts in the area state is acceptable.

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