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Case Number	23/01882/FUL
Application Type	Full Planning Application
Proposal	Erection of Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) (Amended Description)
Location	Ecclesall Primary School High Storrs Road Sheffield S11 7LG
Date Received	13/06/2023
Team	South
Applicant/Agent	SLA Design
Recommendation	Grant Conditionally

## **Time limit for Commencement of Development**

1. The development shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act.

## **Approved/Refused Plan(s)**

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the following plans, except as may be specified in the conditions attached to this permission, which shall in all cases take precedence.

PL01 Revision A Site Location Plan

As published by the Local Planning Authority on 22nd June 2023

PL02 Revision A Proposed Site Layout Plan

PL03 Revision A Proposed Site Sections

As published by the Local Planning Authority on 18th January 2024

Reason: In order to define the permission.

**Pre Commencement Condition(s) – ('true conditions precedent' – see notes for definition)**

3. Before development is commenced a full specification (including colour) of the proposed playing surface and its sub-base shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The surface itself shall correspond to a 'Sport England approved Type 4 Polymeric Surface' standard and both surface and sub-base shall be porous/permeable.

Reason: In the interests of providing an appropriate playing surface and to ensure appropriate drainage from the games area.

4. Before the development is commenced full details of the fall across the playing surface and drainage connections to the schools storm attenuation tank system shall have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To avoid excess surface water run-off from the games area migrating towards neighbouring residential property

**Other Pre-Commencement, Pre-Occupancy and other Stage of Development Condition(s)**

5. Rebound boards for the games area shall be treated with sound reduction material and mounted on acoustic dampeners, details of which should be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The games area shall not be used until the boards are provided in accordance with the approved details, and they shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in the locality.

6. No development shall commence until full details of measures to protect the existing trees to be retained, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved measures have thereafter been implemented. These measures shall include a construction methodology statement and plan showing accurate root protection areas and the location and details of protective fencing and signs. Protection of trees shall be in accordance with BS 5837, 2012 (or its replacement) and the protected areas shall not be disturbed, compacted or used for any type of storage or fire, nor shall the retained trees, shrubs or hedge be damaged in any way. The Local Planning Authority shall be notified in writing when the protection measures are in place and the protection shall not be removed until the completion of the development.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the identified trees on site. It is essential that this condition is complied with before any other works on site

commence given that damage to trees is irreversible.

7. Before the MUGA is first brought into use a detailed soft landscape scheme within the school grounds shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such landscaping detail shall include:

- An accurate planting schedule and planting plan at 1:200 scale.
- A comprehensive list of species and stock specification (All species shall be native species).
- Tree-pit construction details & specification.
- Areas of wildflowers including seed mix and sowing rates.
- A maintenance schedule to ensure the successful establishment of the scheme.

Reason: In the interests of securing a biodiversity net gain on the site.

### **Other Compliance Conditions**

8. The Local Planning Authority shall be notified in writing when the landscape works are completed.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority can confirm when the maintenance periods specified in associated conditions/condition have commenced.

9. Unless otherwise indicated on the approved plans no tree, shrub or hedge shall be removed or pruned without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.

10. The use of the MUGA shall be restricted to pupils at the school and out of school groups noted below:

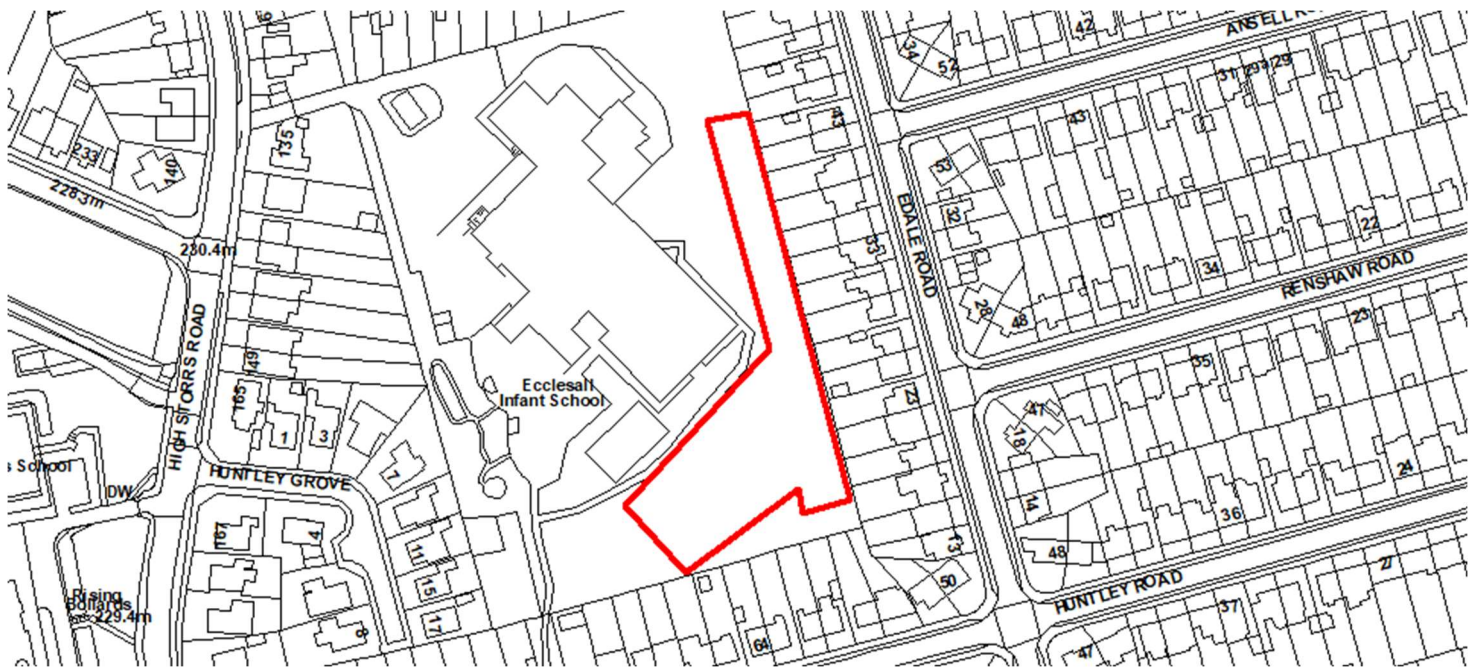
School clubs (between 15:30 and 16:45 on weekdays)  
After school wrap around service (between 16:45 and 18:00 hours on weekdays)

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of neighbouring properties

Attention is Drawn to the Following Directives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has dealt with the planning application in a positive and proactive manner and sought solutions to problems where necessary in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

# Site Location



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## LOCATION AND PROPOSAL

The application site is Ecclesall Primary School, at High Storrs Road, S11. The site comprises of existing education buildings as well as associated external infrastructure, including playground area, playing fields, car parking and amenity/educational areas.

Ecclesall Primary School has been extended and altered over the last decade in order to enable an increase in pupil numbers to approximately 600.

The site is situated within an existing Housing Area – as defined in the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP, 1998) – and the site is bordered on all sides by existing dwellings surround the school on High Storrs Road, Huntley Grove, Huntley Road, Edale Road and High Storrs Close. A large number of properties have their rear gardens abutting the school's curtilage and so can see the school grounds from rear rooms and garden areas. The playing fields themselves are allocated as Open Space 'playing field' in the Unitary Development Plan.

The application site is bounded on all sides by residential properties that have frontages onto Huntley Road to the south, High Storrs Road and Huntley Grove to the west, High Storrs Close to the north and Edale Road to the east. These surrounding properties tend to be either detached or semi-detached and are generally two storeys with pitched roofs. High Storrs School is set across High Storrs Road to the west.

The main school buildings, caretaker's house and car park are located to the north and east of the site, while the majority of the southern section and entirety of the eastern section of the site are utilised as school fields/outside play areas.

The existing school buildings are single storey and largely constructed in a red brick, with the majority of these buildings utilising flat roofs. Several detached single storey buildings, which are in use as temporary accommodation, occupy locations within the site.

The caretaker's house is two storeys with a pitched roof and sits within its own grounds.

With regard to topography, the site has a general downward slope from west to east.

Several trees that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders border the western boundary of the application site.

The specific land identified in the application's red line boundary is currently grassed amenity space located to the south of the main school building.

The application originally sought permission for a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and a 100 metre running track oriented along the eastern boundary of the site (adjacent property curtilage on Edale Road). The running track has however now

been removed from the scheme. Consequently the amended application seeks permission to form a Multi-Use Games Area measuring approximately 45 metres by 30 metres.

The artificial playing surface would be surrounded by a 1200mm high fence consisting of a 700mm high lower board surmounted by a further 500mm of mesh panel. This would be provided to prevent direct movement from the surrounding turf onto the artificial surface (to mitigate the transfer of mud etc. onto the artificial surface thereby reducing maintenance concerns).

The Applicant has identified the current grass field as suffering from severe 'wear and tear' due to a combination of use/drainage/ground conditions. They state that these render the surface unusable during parts of the year with heavy rainfall.

The school has stated that currently the open space is used as follows:

- i) Between 10:00 and 10:40 for morning break (in Spring and Summer when not wet/waterlogged)
- ii) Between 11:45 and 13:15 for lunchtimes (in Spring and Summer when not wet/waterlogged)
- iii) For PE lessons (the school is required to provide 2 hours of PE /week for each child). Once again during the Autumn/Winter months there has been a need to relocate outside PE to inside spaces.

After school activities:

- i) Ecclesall Rangers Junior Football Club use the area Monday to Friday between 15:30 and 16:45 when the field is usable.
- ii) Kids Club - Use the field Monday to Friday 16:45 to 18:00 in the Spring/Summer months when the field is usable.

## REPRESENTATIONS

A total of 105 representations have been received in response to the Council's notification procedure including one from Cllrs Shaffaq Mohammed and Barbara Masters.

89 are letters of objection (several responders have submitted multiple representations), 12 are letters of support and 4 are of a neutral tone.

## SUMMARY OF POINTS MADE

### Objections

Cllrs Shaffaq Mohammed and Barbara Masters have commented as follows:

It appears the facility is being designed for outside school hours activities, if this is the case:

- needs a Traffic Impact Assessment
- information on hours of use
- loss of grass area would reduce recreational provision for non-sporting uses.

- subsequent loss of biodiversity particularly as this has previously been reduced by other development on the site
- loss of privacy to neighbouring properties on Edale Road
- could exacerbate drainage problems in the locality
- clarification is required regarding the Community Use Agreement agreed through permission 17/02518/FUL

A representation has been received from the Millhouses, Ecclesall and Carter Knowle Community Group (MECK)

Summary of points made:

- it has not been made clear why the school needs such extensive facilities
- the Football Federation have objected to the proposal since it would leave no compliant areas onsite to accommodate existing training use.
- no evidence of local demand for MUGA
- could present issues of noise to residential property
- overlap between running track and MUGA mean they can't be used concurrently
- no detail of materials for MUGA surface
- object to pitches being rented out
- could create additional highways issues
- could create drainage issues
- loss of biodiversity
- school has not conducted appropriate consultation with community
- where is the funding coming from?

Other objections have raised the following points:

Environmental

- Overdevelopment of the site
- loss of Green Belt
- contrary to Policy CS47 'Safeguarding of open space'

Residential amenity

- increase in noise and traffic
- loss of privacy to houses on Edale Road especially when facility used by non-school users. (Nos. 27, 33, 35, 39)
- over-dominance of boundary fencing on houses on Edale Road
- increased noise from pitch in the afternoons and over school holidays
- tiered seating is likely to result in loss of privacy
- floodlighting would cause light pollution to neighbouring properties
- use over the weekends would adversely impact on residential amenity

Wellbeing/Education/Sport

- very little grass left for children to play on
- not inclusive (MUGA's are recognised as excluding girls)
- children of both sexes need a green space

- goes against advice of Sport England (paragraph 99 of the NPPF (now superseded by paragraph 103))
  - reduction in air quality due to loss of grass (loss of CO2 uptake)
  - adverse odours from synthetic surfaces towards neighbouring residents. (Smell of rubber in warm weather)
  - loss of greenery adversely impacts on pupils academic performance.
  - will increase localised ambient air temperature
  - no proper studies have been conducted to see if synthetic surfaces are carcinogenic
  - loss of outdoor learning space
  - artificial surfaces lead to more cuts, scrapes, burns and bruising to children.
- Unsafe to play on in Winter
- some parents chose to send their children to Ecclesall Primary School (including those with special needs) in part because of its green open spaces.
  - the MUGA will not improve sports facilities at the school and will increase risk of injury to children from playing surface (particularly cruciate ligaments)
  - increased fencing makes the school look like a prison.
  - concrete surface will not be suitable for physical education.
  - the use of artificial grass introduces the potential for children to ingest micro plastics
  - will have an adverse impact on mental health of children
  - restricts free-play

#### Highway Safety

- increase in noise and traffic
- omit the running track but this would create large amounts of cut material which would need to be transported off site and cause traffic and pollution problems.

#### Ecological/Landscape

- loss of biodiversity including birds, small mammals and reptiles.
- the grassed area has been in decline due to overuse and poor maintenance
- adverse impact on trees (some are protected by a TPO)
- tree T17 would have to be significantly pruned in order to enable use of the running track
- since the large extensions were added there has been further loss of green space / habitat with the removal of the wildlife garden and the removal of trees as well as the installation of further hard surfaces for car parking and other things

#### Drainage

- increase flooding/drainage problems that could result in changes to the water table and cause rising damp in nearby residential property.
- there have been 2 incidences of localised flooding in the last 5 years and these appear to be connected to the over-use of the current grassed area for sport.
- is the geology and hydrology well enough understood to rule out intersecting a geological fault or bedrock outcrop and inadvertently creating a larger water management issue?
- contrary to Policy CS64



- has a flood risk assessment been undertaken?

#### Other reasons for objection

- the MUGA is disproportionate to the needs of a primary school
- the existing wildlife garden has been denuded and neglected rather than enhanced.
- contrary to NPPF policy paragraph 134 which states that 'poorly designed developments should be refused' (now paragraph 139 in the revised NPPF)

#### Support and Neutral

- improved level surface will encourage more pupils to take up sport
- current field often waterlogged in Winter months and uneven and rock hard
- improved access to sport because surface more serviceable particularly in UK climate
- pupils can leave the surface in a clean condition. Mud and dirt can be a discouragement to some.
- truer surface leads to better development of sporting skills and is more accessible to less able bodied.
- the loss of an area of natural turf is a price worth paying in order to provide year-round facilities
- there is plenty of space left to provide for non-sporting needs
- it is difficult to believe that parents have chosen the school because of its playing field rather than its academic achievements and ethos.
- the current sloping terrain represents a poor sporting offer at present.
- many objectors seem to be focussed on football provision ignoring the fact that hockey, rugby and netball can all be accommodated
- if the school were to raise money from the facility this is all to the good as the funding can be re-invested in better facilities
- the school is lucky to have such a lot of ground to be used for sporting activities AND still have places to play or sit on grassy slopes
- the current field is a mud bath in Winter and rock hard in the Summer so any plan to introduce a year round capable pitch is a plus.
- in my youth I played on this grass pitch and it was questionable from a health and safety perspective back then and has only got worse.

#### Matters Raised that are not Material

- no consultation with local people
- land snatch by Council for monetary gain
- not advertised properly by the Council
- no need for the facility
- How will the school maintain the stone boundary wall?
- centred on needs of Ecclesall Rangers FC not schoolchildren
- running tracks etc. should be located 30 metres from residential properties
- motivation is to generate income
- Options such as improving drainage, levelling ground, reseeding grass, rotating use of spaces and marking out pitches should be trialled before embarking on a disruptive and costly enterprise

- alternative sporting arrangements need to be investigated before considering this building project.
- How will the surfaces be maintained? If using herbicides, as well as the impact on contamination of the land, is there a health risk to children?
- no detail of how the proposal will be funded
- Are staff suitably trained to have a wide range of options to offer students to facilitate equal access for all? Not everyone is an expert in exercise.
- Does the school have appropriate equipment to allow choices to be made / facilitate equal access for all?
- loss of private view over the school grounds. (MUGA compared to grass)
- the proposal should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment
- the proposal goes back on previous assurances not to have further development
- better to locate sports facilities at High Storrs School
- The school has introduced other structures without any planning permission.
- the school should convert car parking space and encourage teachers to find alternative ways to commute
- was pre-application advice sought and given?

#### School response to Representations

The school has responded to several points raised in representations and these points are summarised here:

The school has struggled to use the large field consistently due to it being too muddy and wet from late September to March/April.

The school still manages to meet its 2 hours per week PE requirements per pupil but this has resulted in only being able to provide 1 hour per week of outdoor PE rather than two hours.

The school can only use the main playground and small MUGA attached to the playground for each of the 3 classes per year groups at one time and not the large field due to its waterlogged condition.

The proposal will allow the school to fulfil its two hour per week obligation for all 621 pupils/ 21 classes. These classes currently cannot access the field (with exception of the odd day) between September and late March/April due to its condition. The proposed MUGA would ensure access during these months. The issues with the lack of use of the field are becoming profound and classes are often having to hold assembly in their classrooms so the school hall can be used for PE.

#### RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is a significant planning history on the site but the most relevant application would be:

Permission was granted in 2009 (09/02922/RG3) for a Single-storey extension to school including entrance canopy to be used as dual accommodation with Children's Centre

Permission was granted in 2016 (16/01689/RG3) for Siting of temporary unit for use as two classrooms with associated storage

Permission was granted in 2017 (17/01982/RG3) for a Single-storey infill extension to form new entrance and associated rooms

Permission was granted in 2017 (17/02518/FUL) for Two/single storey extensions and alterations to school to form additional teaching accommodation, in order to enable an increase of pupil numbers from 180 to 630, provision of Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), increase in car parking provision and associated hard and soft landscaping works

Permission was granted in 2018 (18/01416/RG3) to allow extended time limit for use of classroom (Application under Section 73 to vary/remove condition No. 3. Time limit for removal of classroom unit; as imposed by planning permission 16/01689/RG3

Permission was granted in 2019 (19/02327/FUL) for the erection of a single storey detached classroom.

Permission was granted in 2023 (23/00252/FUL) for the provision of a glass roof over an existing courtyard with mezzanine viewing gallery.

A pre-application enquiry was made regarding this current proposal.

Officer advice confirmed there was no objection in principle to the development subject to the input of Sport England and that matters of lighting, drainage, visual impact, noise and disturbance would require further detailed assessment through a formal application.

## PLANNING ASSESSMENT

### Principle of Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the framework for the planning policy and development within England. The overarching principle is to ensure that new development is sustainable and the local policies cited in this report are all considered to be in accordance with the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.

The Council's development plan comprises the Core Strategy, which was adopted in 2009 and the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in 1998. Whilst the UDP pre-dates the NPPF, the policies should not be considered out-of-date and should be given due weight, according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (most recently updated in 2023).

The Sheffield Draft Local Plan has now been submitted and has some limited weight.

The Plan indicates that the school grounds are classified as Urban Green Space.

In all cases, the assessment of any development needs to be considered in light of paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where there are no relevant development plan policies or policies are not consistent with the NPPF, planning permission should be granted (the tilted balance) unless there are particular areas or assets of particular importance, which provide a clear reason for refusal (eg. Green Belt, risk of flooding etc.); or any adverse impact of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sports and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Paragraph 103 of the NPPF identifies playing fields as areas which should not be built on unless it is surplus to requirements; or replacement of equivalent or better provision is made; or it is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

The application site lies in an Open Space Area. The MUGA is proposed within the area of playing field to the south of the main school building and the south west corner of the surface would lie within 5 metres of the foot of gardens serving houses located on Huntley Road.

The area to be utilised currently forms part of the main playing fields for the school. However, it does not meet the technical definition of a sports field as defined by Sport England.

UDP Policy LR5, which relates to development in open space, serves to protect and maintain the green and open character of open space by restricting development to avoid significant harm and loss of open space, including ancient woodland and public space.

Core Strategy Policy CS47 seeks to safeguard open space by not permitting development which would result in a quantitative shortage of open space, the loss of high quality open space or cause a break in the City's Green network.

However, the policy is focussed on public open space (parks and small informal open spaces) rather than school grounds. It is not considered that this proposal will materially affect the quantity of such open space in the locality, and neither will it affect the City's Green Network.

Emerging policy GS1 (emerging local plan) reflects to a considerable degree the thrust of policies LR5 and paragraph 103 of the NPPF and seeks to protect the green and open character of open space by restricting built development on such spaces.

The proposed MUGA will provide alternative sports and recreational provision for the children attending the school. It will not result in the loss of open space.

Implications of the Proposed Surface

## Sports (formal)

The introduction of the MUGA would allow for an increase in more formal sports activities given that the surface would be capable of providing year-round facilities that would not be weather dependent. Some representations have suggested that this will benefit boys more than girls since this is likely to facilitate increased capacity for football.

Representations have suggested that there is some evidence that fenced MUGA's tend to be dominated by male groups but it is suggested by Officers that much of the documentation put forward in that respect relates to locations within public parks and there is the opportunity within a school setting for activities to be more structured and monitored by staff.

It is also considered that the view, stated in some representations, that the court will not be used by girls is somewhat short-sighted given the significant increase in profile and take-up of women's football over the past decade.

The school does host 'after school' clubs which are an extension of the Schools overall educational offering. These clubs provide wrap around care for parents and are the only clubs that use the school fields. Currently, the wrap around care clubs are over subscribed. The school has stated that these wrap around clubs have to be frequently cancelled due to poor weather affecting the condition of the playing field much to the frustration of parents who have to leave work early to collect their children. They feel the MUGA would help mitigate such occurrences.

## Visual Amenity

UDP Policy BE5 and Core Strategy Policy CS74 set out the design principles. Policy BE5 requires development to incorporate good design, the use of good quality materials and encourages original architecture.

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 135) states that developments need to contribute towards creating visually attractive, distinctive places to live, work and visit, whilst also being sympathetic to local character. Innovation should not be prevented but developments should add to the quality of an area whilst providing a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. This assessment will have regard to this overarching principle. The local policies cited above are consistent with the NPPF and can therefore be given substantial weight.

The proposed MUGA will be constructed within the existing grounds, incorporating durable materials, with a topcoat of a polymeric material. The MUGA will be logically positioned, located well away from the highway and not visible to any significant degree from the public domain and will therefore have little/no impact on the street scene.

The surface will, of course, be visible from the windows of neighbouring residential properties and, as such, it is considered that a medium/dark green would be the

most appropriate colour for the surface given the visual context of the school grounds. The final colour of the surface can be secured through condition.

The mesh fence panels will enclose the MUGA and provided these are appropriately specified and coloured there should be no significant visual harm.

Given the above, the proposed development should be acceptable in visual amenity terms and as such, will accord with the local and national policies.

#### Residential Amenity

UDP Policy H14(c) states that residents should not be deprived of light, privacy or security or cause serious loss of existing garden space which would harm the character of the neighbourhood. This is consistent with NPPF Paragraph 135 which seeks to maintain amenity for existing and future users.

#### Noise and Disturbance

It is acknowledged that by virtue of its function the MUGA will generate noise from the activities carried out, i.e. children's voices, shouting, or from impact sounds of balls/equipment. The nearest properties are those to the south and east. The MUGA will be approximately 20 metres away from the nearest properties and achieve significantly greater distances to many of the properties neighbouring the school grounds.

It is not considered that noise levels should rise beyond a level that might be expected from school grounds and appropriate sound levels will be maintained if the MUGA is to be used solely by the pupils of the school and during normal school hours as opposed to communal use in the evenings and at weekends. The main cause for concern would arise from the impact of balls striking any courtside kickboards and there may be some potential for impact/vibration noise being generated.

Greater concerns would arise should community use be proposed and the pitch/courts be used by adults. This would likely result in greater impact noise with such users able to generate greater power so that balls would strike kickboards with greater velocity. However, it is noted that the school state that the MUGA is to be used solely by children at the school.

Kickboard design can alleviate rebound noises with sound reduction materials added or the use of acoustic dampeners. It is therefore possible to condition a requirement that such mitigation measures be installed prior to the court being brought into use. Subject to that condition it is not considered that any noise generated through use of the pitch should result in noise above and beyond that which might be expected from a school use.

This does not mean that noise will not be audible at the site boundaries but there is existing potential for noisy activities to be experienced by residents given the proximity of their homes to school grounds with existing levels of activity within school operating hours.

Subject to an additional condition limiting the use to pupils only on weekdays (to negate the possibility of adult players who are more powerful, and sometimes inappropriately vocal and also to provide some respite for neighbouring properties at weekends) it is therefore considered that the proposal will not raise significant concerns regarding residential amenity.

#### Overbearing

It is not considered that the MUGA itself would have adverse overbearing implications in terms of its presence. The intention is to enclose the MUGA with a 1200mm high treatment consisting of a 700mm high lower board surmounted by a further 500mm of mesh panel. Given the height of the MUGA fence and (even allowing for the marginal increase in ground levels to provide a level playing surface) its distance from the nearest residential property is substantial and it is not considered that any adverse impacts would arise.

The proposed two metres high fence at the site boundary does not form part of the application and will be erected in exercise of permitted development rights. It does not form part of this application.

#### Overlooking

Since the area would be used by the same user group as at present it is not considered that any significant overlooking of neighbouring residential curtilage would occur. The proposal did originally include for more substantial cut and fill operations that would raise localised ground levels (in order to provide for a level playing/running surface).

Section B-B of plan PO3 does indicate that the MUGA level will be below that of the nearest current spot heights. Finished pitch level is shown at 225.25 AOD with nearest spot heights adjacent the south boundary (indicated on Plan PO2) shown at 226.0 -226.5 AOD.

Even allowing for some limited departure due to localised variations in levels this information, combined with the fact that users are children aged 4-11, leads to a conclusion that any casual overlooking towards gardens is likely to be minimal and entirely consistent with what can be expected for residential curtilage bordering school grounds.

The introduction of the proposed boundary fence, though not likely to be of a solid nature, would further mitigate for any casual overlooking potential.

Some representations have mentioned the overlooking potential of tiered seating and this is a reference to paragraph 4.1 of the Design and Access Statement. The statement actually refers to the grassed slopes that could be created by any cut and fill exercise as providing spectator opportunity rather than bespoke tiered 'stands'. It is not considered that opportunities to sit on sloping grassed areas represent a threat to residential privacy.

## Smells/Odours

A representation has suggested that the court would generate a smell of warm rubber in the Summer months. Officers cannot verify whether or not some slight odour might arise in hot weather but, and it is not considered that such a factor represents a significant concern.

## Change of Surface/'Loss' of Open Area

Significant numbers of representations have lamented the loss of the grassed area and the implications for 'free play' within the school grounds. There can be little doubt that the proposal would reduce the available natural landscape within the school grounds.

Currently (excluding the school buildings themselves) the curtilage of the school breaks down to approximately 17% car parking, 33% hard surfaced playground/other play areas including existing MUGA, and 50% grassed areas. The MUGA would result in this latter figure dropping to approximately 41% of the total curtilage (a loss of just under 20% of the existing grassed area) with corresponding rise in hard surface play area.

Hence, whilst recognising the strength of feeling amongst some objectors (and setting aside arguments of the quality/accessibility to the area during inclement weather), the quantitative loss of 'soft' play area still allows for a significant area of the curtilage remaining in open form. There would remain extensive areas of lawn/turf within the school grounds most notably stretching 120 metres along the eastern boundary with a width varying from 20 to 40 metres.

## 'Loss' of Sporting Facility and Sport England

Sport England was consulted on the application and has confirmed that their records indicate no part of the site is considered to be a sports field as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) Procedure Order 2015 and therefore the consultation with Sport England is non-statutory.

They also note that the current site slopes and historic aerial images do not indicate the presence of formally laid out pitches. Due to the above, Sport England's playing fields policy is not engaged in this case.

They do however refer to paragraph 99 of the NPPF (since amended to paragraph 103 in the 2023 version of the NPPF) regarding loss of open space and recreational areas of land and suggest that the proposal does not comply with this paragraph.

Paragraph 103 of the NPPF states:

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:



- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

The policy is more generally applied to cases where built development is proposed on open space areas (for uses such as housing) and therefore seeks to ensure that community access to open space maintained or adequately replaced with equivalent or improved recreational facilities.

This application seeks to alter the playing surface rather than replace it with another form of development and build on the open space, albeit with a greater emphasis on sport and less on 'free-play'.

Clearly in the case of part a) no such assessment has been undertaken since the proposal will replace the existing 'weather compromised' field with a more robust surface thereby satisfying parts b) and c) of the paragraph with regard to sporting activity.

It is noted that the plans indicate the use of 'Evo' artificial grass for the actual surface.

Officers have researched this material and it appears that it is polyurethane backed, is not a specification generally considered appropriate by Sport England and therefore represents an inappropriate surfacing material in these circumstances. Officers are aware that there are more suitable polymeric surfaces available for such uses. These are not 'artificial grass' but fulfil a sports function more adequately.

These alternative polymeric sports surfacing comply with the 'Sport England Type 4 Polymeric Surface' or 'Type 4 MUGA' standard. This type of surfacing is often most popular with multi use games areas.

This matter has been discussed with the Applicant's agent who has agreed to the Officer proposed alternative surface.

Subject to a condition requiring the employment of such surfacing and given that the proposal should result in enabling the school to more readily advance the sporting curriculum it is considered that the proposal is satisfactory.

#### Ecology/Biodiversity

Note: As this application was validated before 12th February 2024 it is exempt from the most recent legislation requiring developments to provide a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain. Any requirement in this respect is therefore limited to that set out in para 180 of the NPPF which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

This is supplemented by the Councils Technical Advice Note (September 2023).

Paragraph 4.2 which states that:

'Within Sheffield, development within the scope of this TAN will be encouraged to deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain of a minimum of 10%. The council will therefore encourage developments to deliver a biodiversity net gain of a minimum of 10%.

It should be noted that the BNG of 10% included here is aspirational.

The TAN continues at paragraph 4.5:

'Provision of BNG habitat creation and enhancement is expected to be on site in the first instance. The BNG approach embeds a spatial hierarchy of habitat delivery, where there is a preference for onsite or local enhancements.'

The school has made efforts to enhance biodiversity around the site which pre-date this application though some of these are challenged in representations. These include the planted areas in the south west and north east corners of the site.

Notwithstanding the quantity/quality of efforts made to date it is considered that the proposal would result in the loss of an area of natural turf which currently provides a potential resource for flora and fauna albeit likely somewhat restrictive in terms of quality or diversity.

It is therefore considered that any likely negative aspects of the MUGA in this regard could be offset through the introduction of additional native species planting within the site. An appropriate landscape scheme to bolster biodiversity should therefore be required through condition. This should include for planting of native species trees and wildflowers along the school boundaries and a maintenance schedule for such species.

The introduction of additional planting should also contribute to an offset to the carbon 'costs' of the proposal.

#### Landscape/Trees

There are several boundary trees located close by the boundary of the school grounds. Of these one group on the west boundary is covered by TPO 808/231. These trees are located in the back garden of No. 143 High Storrs Road and lie a significant distance from the proposal.

A further TPO (808/231) applies to a single Beech tree in the back garden of No. 72 Huntley Road. This tree is designated as T11 in the Arboricultural report submitted in support of the application. The trunk is located approximately 24 metres from the nearest point of the MUGA and the crown spread some 16 metres from the playing surface.

Given the above it is not considered that the closest protected trees will be compromised by the proposal.

There are other boundary trees located closer to the proposed development though none with crown spreads significantly overlapping the pitch. Since the running track has now been removed from the scheme the closest group are those trees on the southern boundary of the school/located in the back gardens of Nos. 58-62 Huntley Road (T7-T10 inclusive in the Applicants Arboricultural report).

These trees are indicated for retention (the school has no control over the removal of T7, T8 and T10 since they are not within the ownership of the Applicant). The Arboricultural Method Statement indicates that appropriate tree protection fencing and ground boards can be employed so as to protect the vitality and longevity of the trees in question.

Further areas of tree protection will be extended to the trees to the west (including T11 (TPO 808/231)) and to the small specimens located close-by the eastern boundary wall adjacent the gardens of Nos. 23/25 Edale Road

Given all of the above, and subject to appropriate conditions to secure the suggested tree protection areas it is not considered that the proposal will result in any adverse impact on the boundary trees.

#### Drainage

It is apparent from the planning history of the site (most notably the Officer report for 17/02518/FUL) that drainage of the site was a concern when the school was expanded particularly with regard to properties on Edale Road. Initial infiltration proposals in a focussed area were not considered viable and it was felt that these may have posed a threat to residential properties in terms of ground water conditions. Drainage details were resolved through condition discharge application 17/02518/COND3 wherein the appropriate solution was the introduction of attenuation tanks to handle excess surface water run-off in periods of heavy rainfall.

It is clear that the field to which the application relates drains poorly in periods of sustained rainfall, in part due to the clay nature of the soil. This is likely also true of surrounding gardens. The school have provided photographs of the waterlogged field, and the field was somewhat waterlogged when the case officer made a site visit. Concern is raised amongst representations that the introduction of a large impermeable playing area could exacerbate surface water run-off and cause greater issues of water logging in the locality. This is an understandable concern if the MUGA is constructed/surfaced in such a way as to present an impermeable surface.

Officers have therefore required that a two-part drainage approach be employed for the MUGA to address this issue.

The first part of this involves the use of a permeable surface and porous sub-base material for the MUGA itself. It is noted that the plans indicate the use of 'Evo' artificial grass for the actual surface. Officers have researched this material and it appears that it is polyurethane backed and does not allow percolation of surface water.

The use of such a material would therefore seem to negate the provision of any intended permeable sub-bases in terms of drainage and therefore represents an inappropriate surfacing material in these circumstances.

Officers are aware that there are porous polymeric surfaces available for such uses. These are not 'artificial grass' but can fulfil a sports function more adequately whilst being more robust and further addressing the surface water run off problem.

These alternative polymeric sports surfacing comply with the 'Sport England Type 4 Polymeric Surface' or 'Type 4 MUGA' standard. This type of surfacing is often most popular with multi use games areas.

The material exhibits the following characteristics:

- Versatile and can be used for a variety of sports such as football, hockey and netball.
- Impact absorbing surface thereby reducing impact on joints when playing sports.
- Low maintenance
- Suitable for all weather types due to porous surface that effectively drains away rain water.

The Applicant has been made aware of these facts and has agreed that surfacing and sub-base should accord with the above specification. Details can be secured through condition.

It is felt that this element of the strategy should come close to maintaining the existing percolation through the soil. However, it is accepted that this approach alone is unlikely to improve the situation as it stands.

The second part of the strategy would be secured through an appropriate fall on the playing surface. An existing surface water drain, introduced as part of the previous school extension works, runs along the western edge of the proposed MUGA. This pipework runs into previously referred to attenuation tanks (granted under 17/02518/COND3). It should therefore be feasible to introduce a fall across the MUGA so that any excess surface run-off during particularly heavy rainfalls can be diverted into this existing drainage run and thence into the storage tanks.

The performance of the storm tanks is monitored by a remote alarm. When the water levels in the tank/s become high the school are notified. The Applicant has

stated that since its installation, the school has never received a notification from this alarm system even after the very recent heavy flooding elsewhere. This suggests strongly that the attenuation tanks are not currently being 'stretched' in terms of capacity.

The current tank dimensions are 44 metres by 16 metres by 0.6 metres giving an overall volume of over 420 cubic metres. This has been designed to cope with a 1 in 100 year storm event plus a 40% allowance for climate change. Furthermore, should climate change result in more extreme conditions there is sufficient space/capacity to accommodate further tanks.

Further details of the fall across the surface and pipework capacity be secured through condition to ensure that the system has the capacity to cope with extreme rainfall events.

It is considered that the combination of provision of permeable surface/sub-base and appropriate fall/discharge to storm tanks should provide more than adequate mitigation for the loss of 'natural' ground conditions which obviously currently struggles to drain adequately at the present time during periods of high rainfall.

#### Community Use

Policy CF1 (Provision of Community Facilities) within the UDP states that the provision of community facilities will be promoted.

The school building and site currently provide limited facilities used by the 'community' for activities including after school clubs. The aim is to maintain these activities throughout the construction period as well as after completion. There are alternative locations within the school grounds where such activities can be accommodated.

There is no current formal Community Use Agreement in place at the school and the school does not wish for the proposed facility to be utilised by other parties other than school. Since it is clear from many representations that a significant part the local community itself would be averse to such wider use (likely adult sports in the Summer evenings/weekends) then a Community Use Agreement has not been sought in this instance.

#### Highways Considerations

Concerns with regard to highway safety and parking would only arise if the facility were considered for community use and this is not intended. Significant objections with regard to traffic movements and car parking were raised during the application for the large school extension in 2017 and these matters resolved at that time.

The school does host 'after school' clubs which are an extension of the School's overall educational offering. However, it is not considered that such activities, should they utilise the MUGA) would give rise to significant, if any, additional trip generation or adverse impacts on highway safety.

The school has confirmed that there is no intention to let the school grounds in the evenings or at weekends and consequently it is not considered that highway safety concerns arise from the proposal.

### Floodlighting

The school has confirmed that floodlights do not form part of the proposal. In respect of light pollution, the proposal therefore has no implications for residential amenity.

### Response to Representations

Matters relating to general drainage, residential amenity, highway safety, ecology, biodiversity and open space have been dealt with in the main body of this report.

- Since the proposed surface should accord with Sport England requirements and such a specification has been used in MUGA's countrywide it is not considered that the assertion that the surface could be carcinogenic, dangerous to play on, or lead to ingestion of particles from the surface are relevant planning considerations.

- The site is not located in the Green Belt

- It is not for the Local Planning Authority to pass judgement on or advise the school on playing field maintenance but only to judge the application on its planning merits.

- loss of CO<sub>2</sub> uptake and potential localised ambient air temperature increases for such limited area of sports pitch are not considered robust reasons to refuse the application.

- the site does not lie within a Flood Risk Zone and therefore there is no justification for requiring a Flood Risk Assessment.

- Notifications regarding the application were made in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A significant period of time has elapsed since the application was published so as to enable interested parties to comment on the proposal.

### Summary and Recommendation.

The proposal represents the development of sports facilities in school grounds, which are located within a Housing Area (UDP). Officers consider that that the proposed development does not constitute overdevelopment and should not detract from the open character of the open space despite the presence of a formal surface and low level fencing. There will be no overall loss of open space, though there is certainly an aspect of re-purposing part of the grassed curtilage to facilitate a more resilient surface for play/sport. The proposed facility will allow the open space to continue to be used, with the benefit for the school and its pupils of resulting in increased recreational use throughout the year.

Substantial objections refer to loss of 'free-play' and biodiversity. However, it is considered that a substantial area of the schools curtilage will remain as open grassed area and any biodiversity impacts of the loss of lawned area can be more than mitigated for through the introduction of higher quality planting within the school grounds.

The development is in close proximity to some neighbouring gardens which are currently 'vulnerable' to the potential for noise from school activity and subject to conditions relating to court kickboards the proposal should have no significant adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity.

The proposed development satisfies policies LR5 and CS47 as well as paragraphs 102, 103 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Given all of the above the proposal is recommended for approval subject to conditions specified in the above report.

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