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Mill Hill Preservation Society The Studio, Mote End, Nan Clark's Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7 4HH
tel & fax: 0208 906 0769 e-mail: contact@mhps.org.uk web: www.mhps.org.uk Registered Charity No. 212993
Patron: Lady Hobson OBE JP President: David Welch MA FCIS Chair: John Living AAdip CMdip RIBA

Andrew Dillon, Principal Planning Officer,
North Area Developments Team - London Borough of Barnet
Development Management & Building Control Services
Barnet House, 1255 High Road
Whetstone
N20 0EJ

23rd February 2017

Your Ref; 16/8173/FUL

Dear Mr Dillon

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2015

Site: Allianz Park, Greenlands Lane, London NW4 1RL

PROPOSAL: *The demolition of existing West Stand and erection of new permanent spectator stand with seating for 3,053 spectators incorporating changing and storage accommodation and ancillary hospitality lounge/restaurant, hospitality suites, and bars; Ancillary education accommodation, shared accommodation and circulation space; Formation of a new permanent means of access for pedestrians and emergency vehicles off Greenlands Way and the laying out of the land in front of proposed West Stand for landscaping and community use; The retention of the existing East Stand and extension of the existing reception area. The erection of ancillary accommodation for storage of athletics and match day equipment and also a new ticket office and toilet block within the existing Stadium boundary together adaptation of the existing means of enclosure; The retention of existing demountable stands to north, east and south of the exiting pitch during the rugby season; The laying out of a garden for community use to the rear of the existing East Stand. Use of the existing car parking area to the south of existing stadium to provide parking for spectators on match days and permanent parking for stadium users and visitors at other times; The resurfacing of the existing permeable area of event parking to the rear of Copthall Cottages for use by media vehicles and spectator coaches on match days and for Middlesex University staff at other times; Provision of extended demountable spectator stands to the north and south of existing pitch to increase total stadium capacity up to 15,000 spectators for one event each year.*

We appreciate being given the opportunity to be consulted on the full planning application as set out above. We confirm that the applicant has kept us fully informed about the design development of the proposals through various meetings with our Committee. We are pleased also to note that some of our suggestions have been incorporated. Generally we have commented on the Planning Statement by Chase and Partners dated December 2016. Our clause numbering relates to this document and we refer to other documents as needed.



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Section 1.0 Introduction

We have read the GLA preliminary report dated 15th December 2016 ref: D&P/2730b and we include items from this report where we feel they are particularly relevant. We recognise that the main policies to be considered are 2016 London Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Barnet Core Strategy and the Copthall Planning Brief 2016.

Section 2.0 The Application Site

Clause 2.6: The site is a 'brownfield site' within the Green Belt with planning permission for a community based sports stadium for the purposes of rugby, athletics and community activities. The existing West Stand is old and no longer fit for purpose and we agree it needs to be replaced (see also Clause 3.8). The applicant states that the proposals are inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and that 'very special circumstances' will need to be demonstrated. The Society agrees with these statements.

Clause 2.39: The London Sports Institute (part of Middlesex University) currently occupies part of the East Stand with some 400 undergraduate students, 19 full time staff and 90 post-graduates. It is proposed that the University activities are expanded and move into the new West Stand, vacating their space in the East Stand – although we could not find what this released space would be used for by Saracens. Whilst there is an argument for sports facilities in the Green Belt we could find no reference in the NPPF to educational facilities having any similar preferences. (The numbers quoted in this clause differ from Clause 3.16)

Section 3.0 Background to the Application Proposals

Clause 3.15: The London Sports Institute (LSI) lists various bodies that they work with. Among these is Queens Park Rangers. The Society feels that, having fought off previous planning applications for football to be played at Copthall, it would be regrettable if this proposal brought football to the stadium that was approved for Rugby and Athletics. (Clause 3.22 also lists the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation.)

Clause 3.21: We note that the pupil numbers in the new West Stand will be some 750 with staff of over 30. This will be a considerable intensification in the Green Belt.

Clause 3.25 to 3.40: These clauses explain the use of the West Stand by the School of Health and Education. We struggle to understand how this function relates to the previously stated symbiotic relationship between a professional sports team and a degree in sports-related activities. For instance, the courses include midwifery, mental health, complementary health and social work together with postgraduate students. In fact midwifery is mentioned 3 or 4 times. Collectively there are 2,000 students enrolled on these courses, so this function has the potential to increase 'on-site' student numbers considerably. We can see no 'very special circumstances' as to why this function has to be included on a site given over to sport and sports development. It seems the site is being used as the current facilities are to be lost at the Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead in 2017. (Clause 3.30)



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Section 4 The Proposed Development

Clause 4.1: the Society believes that what is being proposed is very much a continuation of what has been established already except that there is a significant intensification of the Middlesex University functions on the site. (Clause 4.11 sets out the table of Proposed Accommodation and the space used by Middlesex University is in excess of 5,600 sq. m. out of a total gross internal floor area of 9,192 sq. m.)

Clauses 4.2 to 4.23: Other items seem to relate to the improvement of parts of the site that have been found in need of further work or improvement including:

Clause 4.13: improvements to current parking area surface

Clause 4.14: main car park available for all functions, including athletics and one-off day events (like the half-marathon etc.)

Clause 4.16: ancillary athletics storage

Clause 4.17: extension to East Stand reception area

Clause 4.19: new 106 Agreement

Similarly, other items are considered under Clause 4.22 & 4.23 relate to the structure if the planning application. These are all considered acceptable.

Section 6 Planning Policy Overview

This section is fully covered by the applicant and we have only a few observations:

Clause 5.4: This clause argues that under NPPF there is a strong presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' and for 'approving plans that conform with the development plan without delay'. Generally this is the case but we believe this is not an overriding requirement for proposals in the Green Belt.

Clause 5.15: Paragraph 89 states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate apart from certain exceptions. Two are relevant this application:

'the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purpose of including land within it' and...

'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development'

What is not included in the report are the following clauses, also relevant:

Clause 88: "When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."



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Additionally, the replacement of buildings in the Green Belt is not straightforward and should be limited closely to what is being replaced in volume and footprint:

“the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces” and...

“the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building”

These points are explored further under the Green Belt section to follow.

Clauses 5.16 to 5.46 discuss all aspects of The London Plan 2016 but we were somewhat confused because there was no discussion as to which aspects relate to Green Belt locations. This is not made clear. Presumably the London Plan has to work within the NPPF.

Section 6 The Green Belt

Clause 6.5: The discussion under Clause 5.15 above does seem to imply that the provision of facilities for outdoor sport, and the limited infilling or partial complete development of previously developed sites are acceptable under NPPF. However, other NPPF clauses state that any rebuilding should be not materially larger than the original building in the same use. In this case the proposed West Stand is materially bigger in volume, and with a considerably increased footprint. The scheme may not seem inappropriate in some planning terms, but it certainly does not meet all the requirements of NPPF. Additionally, the rebuilding clause in NPPF does state “in the same use” and there is another complication in that more than half of the floor space is given over to Educational use, so the new stand is not “in the same use” as the original. Moreover the education use is non-conforming in NPPF terms.

Clause 6.11: The fact the site has a building on it does mean to some extent the openness of the Green Belt has already been compromised. However in view of the fact that the new building has a significantly larger mass and footprint does mean that the degree of harm is amplified. We understand that any construction harms the openness, irrespective of its impact in terms of obstructiveness or its aesthetic attractions or qualities. A beautiful building is still an affront to openness, simply because it exists. The same would apply to buildings that are camouflaged or rendered unobtrusive by felicitous landscaping.

Clause 6.28: We agree that the development could be considered as ‘inappropriate’ and that there is harm to the Green Belt by virtue of its effect on the openness of the site.

Clauses 6.29 to 6.35: We have considered the very special circumstances listed such that they might outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt. Of course we accepted that there were considerable benefits related to the East Stand application, and that these benefits have been proven and will still apply to the site including the West Stand. We realize that replacing the dilapidated stand with new is a worthwhile exercise but we do not see it as a ‘very special circumstance’, more as an intensification of activity within the Green Belt.



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This intensification will improve facilities for rugby, athletics and community sport within the Copthall setting. Also the Saracens Sports Foundation and the people they work with will also benefit. However, we would not see this as a 'very special circumstance'. We do not understand how the Health Education Facilities relate to Saracens or the sports degree courses and so we do not see this as a 'very special circumstance'. We have already commented on the symbiotic relationship between the London Sports Institute being involved with a top sports organization, Saracens, for the purposes of improving the sports degree courses on offer and as this relation can only occur in a physical context, this may well be seen as a 'very special circumstance'. However, this alone may not be sufficient argument to outweigh the undoubted harm to the Green Belt.

Section 7 Transport

Clause 7.12 & 7.13: The Society welcomes the fact that the university parking controls used at the Hendon campus will apply to the Copthall location and that students will not be allowed to park except in special circumstances. Also, we welcome that other university users will need permits to be issued in order to use the designated car park. Additionally, we would comment that footpath and cycling networks need further investment as part of the scheme, especially if there will be more students visiting.

Clause 7.19 & 7.20: We agree that a one-off bespoke Matchday Travel Plan will be needed for when the matches at higher capacity (15,000) are played, and that car usage should be kept as low as possible as for normal matchdays.

Clause 7.22, 7.23 & 7.24: We welcome the review proposed for the stadium travel plan. We agree it is currently not effective and that the number of cars coming to Copthall for matches seems to be increasing. Cars are often parked in Champions Way on match days, and whilst the council has done some work to raise the verges, this has not proved entirely effective.

Section 8 Impact on the Environment & Local Amenity

Clause 8.4: The Society agrees that the new stand, if built, should be with materials sympathetic to the East Stand. On the East Stand we were particularly concerned that the end glazing panels to the stadium had vertical elements (to better blend into the background from a distance), and we appreciate that the design for the West Stand follows this. The seating colour also concerned us and the East Stand solution with the multi-tone colours does help the mass of seating to blend into the environment. We hope this detail will also be followed in the West Stand. Finally, we resisted any advertising being incorporated into the building fascias on the East Stand as we felt this was inappropriate to the Green Belt setting. We feel the same about the new stand and we trust the Council will keep a tight control on advertising issues.

Clause 8.5: We are concerned about the visual impact of the stadium, and when the East stand was proposed it was seen as being against the backdrop of the trees bounding the edge of Hendon Golf Course – its bulk never really being appreciated. The West Stand will be

... making change worthwhile



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more 'isolated' in location and will be more obtrusive. An important element of the landscaping proposals and tree planting is between Greenlands Lane and the West Stand, and this should retain the informal and semi-native quality that exists across Copthall rather than becoming a more formal and corporate layout that will accentuate the form and mass of the building.

The Design and Access Statement does show some longer views of the new stand on pages 18, 19, 20 and 21. The most telling views are on page 24 where the long views show the new stand as being well camouflaged by the local trees, whereas the views from the existing leisure centre (that will in fact be replaced in a different location) show how bulky the new stand will be, and how much of the sky – from a pedestrian perspective – will be cut out. It is clear that the new stand is going to have a considerable impact on the local environment. It is therefore important that the north and south stands remain temporary and limited in size as this helps maintain a degree of openness to the Green Belt.

Clause 8.6 (also 8.39 to 8.42 and 10.21): There will be changes to the floodlighting arrangements and it is important that these are discussed and agreed with the local Observatory so that their work is not affected. (University of London, Astronomical Observatory, London, NW7 2QS)

Section 9 Energy & Sustainability

We have no comments on this section and we assume the Council will have the level of expertise to evaluate whether the application complies correctly.

Section 10 Social Infrastructure and the Copthall Site Brief

Clauses 10.9 to 10.19: We are pleased that the Council has prepared a Brief for the development of the Copthall site and we are satisfied that, in general terms, this application is a serious attempt to contribute along the lines suggested. However Clause 10.16 states that (a) Replacement of the West Stand should minimise its overall footprint. In reality, the length and height of both stands are similar, but the depths are not. This greater footprint is not to meet the seating requirements, nor is the ground floor entirely covered with 'rugby and athletics' facilities. We conclude that the extra depth of building is to facilitate the requirements of Middlesex University and education facilities in the Green Belt are not given any preference under NPPF. Whilst we understand the case for the London Sports Institute we do not share the view that the School of Health and Education are sports related. (see previous comments under Clauses 3.25 to 3.40)

Clause 10.17 mentions the **Design & Access Statement** and we have some comments to include specifically related to that document:

Clause 2.8: The Society disagrees with the view that the proposals have 'no negative impact on the character of the area'.



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Clause 2.18: It is suggested that the stated exceptions to the NPPF cover the proposed West Stand, whereas this is only the case with a building of similar size and in the same use.

Clause 3.69: It is stated that the West Stand is not just for Rugby and Athletics, a sporting hub for the community, but including "entertainment and educational venue". We think these later items are not appropriate to the Green Belt.

Clause 4.17: We have already covered.

Clause 4.19: The West Stand does have a negative impact on the environment and its presence we see as doing harm to the Green Belt.

Clause 6.4: This clause discusses segregated pedestrian movement and we would point out that a wide pedestrian route is required along Greenland Lane where it passes in front of the new West Stand. At the moment, fans leaving the stadium on the south side walk along Greenlands Lane sharing it with traffic in order to reach Champions Way. This is unacceptable and there is space to incorporate a pathway.

Section 11 Summary and Conclusions

The proposed redevelopment of the existing West Stand would provide important sporting facilities and social infrastructure for Barnet and London. We consider it not a totally inappropriate development within the Green Belt given the site is developed already. However, in our view there is harm to the Green Belt and the 'very special circumstances' stated to ameliorate this harm we consider weak, especially those related to Middlesex University. We believe that matters related to transport can be improved but that the increase in the capacity number from 10,000 to 10,500 will be manageable, and that the use of the stadium for an annual one-off matchday with up to 15,000 supporters will not present a significant problem given there is no plan to increase cars usage.

Should this planning application be approved, MHPS will expect the applicant to be bound through planning conditions to provide all the community benefits that have been offered as part of the application package, and by a 106 Agreement to deliver full landscaping of the site, and to fund improvements to, and the better management of, the wider landscape of Copthall including meadows, hedgerows and tree stock. We would appreciate our submission being carefully considered and included in the officers' report given to the Planning Committee before their decision is made on this application.

We trust these observations are helpful.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Yours Sincerely

John Living

John Living AAdip CMdip RIBA

Chair MHPS: On behalf of the MHPS Committee and Planning Group