

Item No	Application No. and Parish	8/13 week date	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(5)	14/01558/FUL Bradfield	16 th June 2014	Construction of 6 high performance tennis courts including floodlighting, landscaping, car parking, vehicular and pedestrian link at land to the north of New Road, Bradfield College Land at Bradfield College, Bradfield Bradfield College (applicants)

To view the plans and drawings relating to this application click the following link:

<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=14/01558/FUL>

Recommendation Summary: To **DELEGATE** to the Head of Planning and Countryside to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION**

Ward Member(s): Councillor Quentin Webb
Councillor Graham Pask

Reason for Committee determination: Member call in if recommendation is of refusal to enable Members to assess the impact of the proposal on the AONB.

Committee Site Visit: 22nd October 2014

Contact Officer Details

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1. PLANNING HISTORY

13/03004/FUL: Construction of 6 high performance tennis courts including landscaping and vehicular and pedestrian link at land to the north of New Road, Bradfield College. Withdrawn 07.03.14

2. PUBLICITY

Site Notice Expired: 11th August 2014
Neighbour Notification Expired: 28th July 2014.

3. CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Consultations

Parish Council: Object:

- Lighting will still be intrusive and of major concern. Cut off must be no later than 20.00 hours;
- Additional screening to the north is needed – at least 10m until fifteen year trees mature;
- South side of tennis courts should have trees of 3m high to alleviate traffic confusion.

Planning Policy

The proposal is a greenfield site lying outside the defined settlement boundary of Bradfield. The policy terms are essentially the same as for 13/03004/FUL, and comments supplement these. In the previous comments it was queried as to the extent to which the proposals for the centre were being taken forward in a strategic context. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) has given the centre its support, but it was not clear whether the facility had been identified by the LTA. This application gives more of an overview and strengthens the case for the proposed development.

Overall, the scheme is contrary to policy. However, there are a number of factors to be balanced, particularly the contribution would make to the enhancement of sporting provision in the district. There would be clearly be economic benefits from such a development and this needs to be weighed up against the impact it could have on the character of the surrounding area, particularly as the site is within the AONB. Therefore, if the decision taker considers that the proposal accords with Policy CS19 then, on balance, it is considered that an exception could be made in policy terms in this instance.

Highways:

Vegetation needs to be trimmed back, and therefore should be a condition of any planning approval.

Initially had queries about passengers in cars travelling to the current centre, the overall increase in movements per day/week, the overall increase in number of players.

There is concern that all players currently travel to the site by car, and is expected to continue. There is no alternative appropriate mode of travel to reduce reliance on the private car. Although players may need to travel further afield to access similar courts this does not

automatically mean that this site is appropriate.

The expansion of facilities would put increased pressure on the existing car parking spaces, which whilst generally operating below capacity there are times when they are used at or near capacity. The additional 17 spaces proposed under 14/01554/FUL should be provided before the proposed courts are brought into use.

Following receipt of further information it is clear that there will be quite an increase in traffic overall per day and per week, and the aims of the proposal mean that this will become a major tennis centre in southern England. All journeys would be by car and bus services are limited. The increases in traffic will therefore be in an unsustainable location.

It is probable that when the previous tennis centre was approved that the Highway Authority did not anticipate vehicle movements of around 590 per week. As the potential increase of 148 additional players per week increases this to 738 movements per week overall this is significant. The facility will improve facilities for existing members but it will also attract new members/players which will intensify the use. It is acknowledged that there already is a tennis centre, but the proposal will result in an increase in players, vehicle movements and car parking demands. The proposal is not to specifically expand facilities for Bradfield College but to provide/expand on the existing community wide facility. The reasons given for this location being the only possible site within the area are not highway considerations, and therefore no weight can be afforded from a highways perspective. However, it is appreciated that a large proportion of movements are already occurring without this proposal.

Transport Policy

The location of the proposed extended facility in Bradfield is not considered to be in a sustainable location in transport terms and is therefore not considered to be in accordance with policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the West Berkshire Core Strategy and the Local Transport Plan. Paragraph 34 of the NPPF advises that developments that generate significant movements should be located when the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable travel methods maximised. The location in Bradfield presents no realistic alternative choices other than the car, and there infrequent bus services. A Travel Plan would not be requested as the effectiveness of this may be questionable.

Core Strategy Policy CS13 seeks to improve travel choice and facilitate sustainable travel. This echoes the Local Transport Plan. It is not considered that the proposal would satisfy these proposals.

Whilst there has been a lot of thought into the choice of site, there is no evidence of examination of alternative sites, and this would have been a key piece of evidence to support the case for development.

The NPPF (paragraph 34) does also discuss supporting leisure developments in rural areas and which respect the character of the countryside. It is understood that the proposal is for more than a community use, and that its reach could be a regional one.

Paragraph 32 advises that proposals should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts are severe. As there are no personal injury accidents over the last 5 years it would not appear that there are road safety issues arising from the development.

There is a difficulty though in establishing the base position from which to judge this proposal, as the original tennis centre seems to have increased in use beyond that of which it was originally intended or anticipated. It would be difficult to limit the use of the new facilities, and the pull could be wider reaching than it currently is causing a greater number of trips from a wider area, all of which could be made by car due to the lack of alternatives.

In conclusion, planning policies seek to facilitate sustainable development and making sure that facilities are located in areas served by sustainable transport. There is no realistic choice for people wanting to access this facility and almost all trips will be by private car.

Landscape Consultant

Revised proposals have been submitted following the withdrawal of application 13/03004, and discussions have been held with Cooper Partnership before the submission of the revised application.

The number of viewpoints is limited and confined to within 1km of the site. The exposed views are from the Pangbourne Road and access to the Sports Centre parking. There are clear views of parts of the site from Dark Lane, and a sequence of filtered views along a stretch of the footpath along the Pang Valley bottom.

The revised proposals are welcomed and have addressed the landscape and visual concerns arising from the original application. The scheme is now acceptable subject to the implementation of the design layout and landscape proposals. The two photomontages show that due to the setting down of the courts into the landscape, and by the enclosure by the low bank and linear native tree and shrub planting, the built form will be unobtrusive in the first instance and screened from views as the planting matures. The overall appearance of the site would be dominated by the grassed slopes and new planting.

The proposed form and mix of planting will blend well into the landscape pattern and create links with the existing landscape features. The 1m high bank is in keeping with the typical hedgerow bank and would not be intrusive in the landscape. The chain link fence will incongruous initially would be lost within the proposed planting over time.

The proposed lighting columns are set down and would not break the skyline in views from the north. In views from the south, the columns will be visible initially though as the tree planting matures they would be screened during the day. In both cases the columns would be seen against a backcloth of mature trees or trees that are already higher than the columns to the south and west of the site. At night the 24 floodlights will be conspicuous especially in winter with the loss of leaf cover, but they would not be on the skyline or set within a wider dark area and would have a much lower impact than the floodlights on the hilltop to the south.

Conditions are suggested for landscaping, lighting to be in accordance with Zone E1 of the Institute of Lighting Engineer's guidance; the early provision of perimeter to avoid delays in providing screening to the site; and detailed landscaping proposals for the treatment of the slope between the car park and lower tennis courts to ensure the landscape treatment will be successful.

Tree Officer

The site itself does not contain a significant numbers of trees, other than boundary planting and hedges, with a small group of trees by the existing hard surface play area to the southeast of the site. There may be loss of trees to facilitate the access though it is not clear which trees could be lost. The remaining trees can be adequately protected. Landscape issues revert to the landscape architect. Overall, no objections, and conditions recommended.

Conservation Officer

The site is currently an open field, bounded by trees and hedging along its north, east and west boundaries. The southern boundary is open, allowing views of the site from the road. The character of this open field makes an important contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area. The applicants have attempted to mitigate the harm of the development on the setting of the conservation area and the rural character of the AONB by setting down the courts into the landscape and enclosing them with a low bank and native tree and shrub planting. The proposed landscaping will help screen the site when viewed from the road to the south and from the open countryside to the north and east. It is appreciated that the site will benefit from a reasonable level of screening though there will be a spread of development beyond the defined built form of the conservation area. Query whether an appraisal of alternative sites within the college complex has been undertaken.

Archaeology Officer

No objection.
The held evidence suggests that there will be no major impact on any features of archaeological significance. Therefore, no archaeological assessment or programme of investigation and recording would be necessary.

Environmental Health

Artificial lighting can give rise to nuisance from overspill lighting and glare, affecting other properties in the vicinity of the area. An outdoor lighting design assessment has been submitted providing information on the type of lighting to be use and an assessment of the impact on the courts and outside those areas. The lighting is a horizontal luminaire with good control of light spill and glare into areas outside the courts. The information suggests that light spill is limited to close proximity to the courts, and at low luminance. Condition that the lighting is installed in accordance with the lighting design.

Ecology Officer

Conditional permission would be acceptable. These include landscaping, use of courts and lighting, erection of bat boxes and advice on construction methods.

North Wessex

Agree with the conclusions reached by the Landscape Architect who

Downs AONB Board

in landscape terms now considers the scheme acceptable. Pleased to see the improvements made since the previous application was withdrawn. The potential for this scheme to be absorbed into the landscape successfully does depend on the planning conditions and in particular relation to landscaping. Conditions should be as per the recommendations of the Landscape Architect, and also suggest a cut off time for the floodlighting, and 10pm would seem appropriate to protect the dark skies of the AONB.

It should be stated however, that the AONB Board do not usually undertake site visits and their comments are based on desktop analysis.

Environment Agency Sport England

Considered to have a low environmental risk.

Sport England has assessed the application using Sport England's Land Use Planning Policy Statement 'Planning for Sport Aims and Objectives'. The proposals are consistent with the objective to ensure new sports facilities are planned for and provided in a positive and integrated way, and that opportunities for new facilities are identified to meet current and future demands for sporting participation.

3.2 Representations

Total: 0

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1 The statutory development plan comprises the saved policies in the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007) (WBDLP), and the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026.

4.2 Other material considerations include government guidance, in particular:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF)
- National Planning Policy Guidance (March 2014)
- Bradfield Parish Plan
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2009-2014)
- North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2002
- Newbury District Wide Landscape Character Assessment 1993
- Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003
- West Berkshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026

4.3 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF advises that, for the 12 months from the day of its publication, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework. The following saved policies from the Local Plan are relevant to this application:

- OVS.5: Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control
- ENV.27: Developing on Existing Institutional and Educational sites in the Countryside

- TRANS.1: Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development
- 4.4 In addition, the following locally adopted policy documents are relevant to this application:
- Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006)
 - Part 1 Achieving Quality Design
 - Part 5 External Lighting
- 4.5 The West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2016) July 2012 now forms part of the development plan and therefore its policies attract full weight. The following policies are relevant to this application:
- Area Delivery Plan Policy 1: Spatial Strategy
 - Area Delivery Plan Policy 5: North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - CS 10: Rural Economy
 - CS 13: Transport
 - CS 14: Design Principles
 - CS 16: Flooding
 - CS 17: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
 - CS 18: Green Infrastructure
 - CS 19: Historic Environment and Landscape Character

5. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The application seeks full permission for the construction of six tennis courts made of artificial clay, 24 no. 8 metre high floodlights, a vehicular and pedestrian access route from the existing access road within the College grounds with ten parking spaces for disabled users, erection of a 2.75 metre high chain link fence, earth mounding of 1 metre high to the perimeter of the site, and new hedgerow planting and double line of trees on the eastern boundary. The site is located on agricultural land to the eastern side of Bradfield College, adjacent to the existing sports centre. The courts are to be arranged in two groups on two level terraces with associated cut and fill. The site is physically and functionally disconnected from the main college campus.
- 5.2 The aim of the application is to enable the courts to be used for 11 months of the year, as opposed to 9-10 months for real clay, and to enable use by the college and other schools and the community. A key aim is to increase the ability for individuals to play tennis, which is an aim shared by the Lawn Tennis Association and Sport England. The courts would enable a greater number of competing junior and adults, increase the centre's ability to provide tennis to the local community, and to increase club member capacity and playing time throughout the year.
- 5.3 The previous application 13/03004/FUL was withdrawn following concerns with the impact of the scheme on the character of the area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the justification of the scheme given the unsustainable location. The current application removes a previously proposed 3 metre high bund between two terrace of courts, together with associated retaining walls and steps; the bund to the eastern perimeter is limited to 1 metre; increases the amount of tree planting; and land levels are proposed to change to set the courts into the slope of the land.

- 5.4 Pre-application advice was sought 2012 and the Council highlighted the main issues, and what should be submitted with any forthcoming application. The advice concluded that the scheme may not be suitable for the site, and may not attract officer support.

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:

- The principle of development, including sustainability
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- The impact on ecology and biodiversity
- The impact on highway safety
- The impact on neighbour amenity
- Presumption in favour of sustainable development

6.1 The principle of development

- 6.1.1 The site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary, and therefore in the countryside in planning policy terms. The supporting text of Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy outlines that a more restrictive approach to development will be taken in such locations, focusing on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy, and therefore proposals should be justified. Policy ADPP1 also outlines that development within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be more restrictive than in the general countryside. This restrictive approach is also reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape beauty of AONBs which, along with National Parks, have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The principle of development has therefore been judged on the need for the facility in this location, the search for, alternative sites and whether the development of this nature within AONB can be justified.
- 6.1.2 The site is adjacent to the current sports centre of the college, and the site would be a logical place for additional sports facilities. Part 8 of the NPPF, in the context of promoting healthy communities, supports access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. This is echoed in Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy as outdoor sports facilities are classified as Green Infrastructure (GI), which the policy seeks to enhance, and increase provision of. Part 3 of the NPPF, in the context of supporting a prosperous rural economy, seeks to promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities, and includes sports venues. Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy outlines that the main urban areas will be the focus for most development, including leisure uses where the extent and capacity of supporting infrastructure, services and facilities are the greatest.
- 6.1.3 Therefore, officers do consider that additional sports facilities would be of benefit to the District. However, they do need to be sited in the right location. Core Strategy Policies ADPP1, CS13, Local Plan Policy TRANS1, part 4 of the NPPF and the Council's Local Transport Plan seek to facilitate sustainable transport and focus most development within or adjacent to settlements included in the settlement hierarchy. Bradfield is not located in the settlement (not to be confused with Bradfield Southend which is a Service Village). There has been no information

given either by the applicants or by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) who are part funding the courts as to other sites examined, particularly those in more central and accessible location such as Theale, Thatcham and Newbury. Questions have been asked, as part of the pre-application advice, during the initial application, and as part of the current application, as to what other sites have been examined, including within the existing College boundaries. It is apparent that no other sites have been examined, and instead the arguments in support of the application site continue to be given. The LTA has confirmed that no other clubs in West Berkshire are looking to develop their facilities to include an additional 6 artificial clay, floodlit courts.

- 6.1.4 The floodlit outdoor clay courts would be a new addition to West Berkshire, as it does not appear that such a facility is available. Players who wish to make use of these facilities would need to travel to the White Horse Centre in Abingdon, Win Tennis in Bisham Abbey near Marlow, Team Bath Tennis at Bath University, and the West Hants Club in Bournemouth. These facilities range from a distance of 24 miles to 77 miles from the College.
- 6.1.5 An aim of the College is to build on an already successful tennis facility, which currently ranks as the second best facility for Regularly Competing Juniors (RCJs), despite it's category as a 'small' centre. The Transport Statement considers that the provision of such a facility would enable existing users of the tennis facilities at the college to continue to use the facilities, thus reducing the overall need to travel. The new facilities also enable the Disability Training Programme to be improved and expanded. The College confirms that the tennis courts would be primarily used by individuals, for coaching of players from the College and local community, with occasional tournaments. It is likely that use of the existing tennis centre would be reduced as some lessons/sessions could be allocated to the outdoor courts.
- 6.1.6 Such aims are understandable, but officers are not convinced that the site chosen is suitable. The development of the site further expands the boundaries of Bradfield College into the attractive surrounding agricultural land, and as Bradfield is not a sustainable location there are concerns that there would be no choice but to travel to the centre by the car. There are limited bus services on the 101 and 104, with the last bus at 16.16 to Tilehurst and 17.52 to Newbury. It appears that as such a facility would be unique to West Berkshire that it will become an attraction for new members as well as improving facilities for existing users. When taken with the existing tennis and sports facilities already located at the College could become a major tennis centre in this area with the consequent increase in traffic levels.
- 6.1.7 As there are limited transport choices it is likely that most users would travel by car, and this goes against the aims of Policies ADPP1 and CS13 of the Core Strategy and guidance in the NPPF and Local Transport Plan. It is accepted that this may decrease travel to other centres. However, it should be considered that the other tennis centres are mainly in central positions, and could be accessed by a range of travel choices. Bisham Abbey is perhaps the least accessible of places, though is approximately 1.5-2km from the train station. Again, officers are not against such a facility being provided within the district, but believe it should be sited in a location accessible by a range of sustainable travel choices, in line with adopted development planning policies and government guidance.
- 6.1.8 The original tennis centre of three courts was originally permitted with restrictions on its use. The legal agreement contained the provisos that the development shall

primarily be used as a non-commercial sports facility for Bradfield College, and at reasonable times and when the development is not required by the College of the LTA or any local tennis club then 'individuals of the district' shall use the courts 'with the owner's reasonable conditions relating to such use and to payment of a reasonable charge'. The applicants wish to build on a successful tennis centre, and it is clear that the clubs and number of junior players has helped in achieving this goal. However, there are concerns that the centre is operating at a level greater than originally considered or anticipated. The existing centre generates around 590 vehicle movements per week, and together with the proposed courts this could take it up to 738 vehicle movements per week. This is significant, and due to the unsustainable location such an increase in movements, despite being some 26% over the existing situation, this concern cannot be overcome.

6.1.9 This being the case officers believe that insufficient justification has been provided to support the principle of an exception being made to the restrictive policies and government guidance relating to the accessibility of new development, reducing the need to travel, and siting developments in places where there is less demand for travel.

6.2 Impact on the character and appearance of the area and AONB

6.2.1 As noted above the site is located in a prominent and sensitive location within the countryside and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Bradfield Conservation Area lies directly adjacent to the western side of the site.

6.2.2 The site covers part of an open agricultural field within the Pang Valley, outside of the current boundary of Bradfield College, and bounded to the south-west by a strong belt of trees. The land rises to the south, rising from the River Pang to the north-west. There is an existing unlit sports pitch to the south.

6.2.3 There are already column lighting and floodlighting at Bradfield College, in the car park of the sports building and also on the sports pitch to the south of the site, adjacent to the House on the Hill and Faulkners. There are street lamps and light emitting from existing College buildings, and at night the village is generally quite well lit. As outlined in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) the site itself and its surroundings are dark.

6.2.4 The Council's Landscape Architect has reviewed the scheme and the submitted LVIA, and against the Landscape Character Assessments and North Wessex Downs Management Plan. As can be summarised from these documents, the implications from light spillage is a general concern, and in the Pang Valley extension of villages within this area into the surrounding farmland should be resisted.

6.2.5 In terms of views of the site the LVIA identifies these as being limited to within 1 kilometre of the site. The most exposed views are from the Pangbourne Road and access to the sports centre parking. There are clear views of parts of the site from Dark Lane and there are filtered views along a stretch of the footpath along the bottom of the Pang Valley to the north.

- 6.2.6 The Landscape Architect considers that the changes to the current proposal from the previously withdrawn application have addressed the landscape and visual concerns arising from the original application. The photo montages show that due to the setting down of the courts into the landscape and the enclosure by a low bank and linear native tree and shrub planting, the built form will be unobtrusive in the first instance and screened from views as the planting matures. The planting will aid in blending the proposal into the landscape. The lighting columns are well set down and would not break the skyline in views from the north. In views to the south the columns would be visible initially and as the tree planting matures they would be screened during the day. The columns would be seen against a backdrop of mature trees or trees that are already higher than the columns to the south and west. At night the floodlights will be conspicuous but would not be on the skyline or set within a wider dark area, and also would have a much lower impact than the floodlights on the hilltop to the south.
- 6.2.7 The North Wessex Downs AONB Board also agree with the conclusions of the Landscape Architect. They also comment that planning conditions would be important to the ability of the scheme to be absorbed into the landscape.
- 6.2.8 Officers appreciate this advice but remain concerned that whilst there would be limited impact from long and middle distance viewpoints that the proposed development would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and landscape of the area immediately surrounding the application site. Bradfield College has a strong distinctive border on its eastern side, and this development further encroaches into the countryside and AONB to its detriment. It is recognised that the courts would be set into the existing slope, with the proposed levels working with the existing contours, and proposed tree and hedge planting would aid in setting the development into the landscape. The Conservation Officer comments that the character of the open field makes an important contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area. The officer also comments that despite the proposed mitigation the spread of development would affect the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 6.2.9 As noted in the LVIA there will be views into the site from surrounding viewpoints, notably Pangbourne Road, Dark Lane and the footpath to the north. Having examined aerial photographs from 1999 and 2003 the character of this part of the College has changed with the building of the tennis centre and car park, with fewer trees. Officers are concerned that, despite the mitigation there will be harm to the site and from viewpoints beyond. It is clear that the courts and fencing would be visible on completion of the development from Dark Lane, the footpath and Pangbourne Road. The photomontages do show that from Pangbourne Road the additional landscaping would limit views into the site. Screening alone does not justify an otherwise unacceptable development.
- 6.2.10 With regard to the lighting there is advice in the Quality Design SPD (Part 5), Core Strategy Policy ADPP5 and the Institute of Lighting Engineer's guidance on light pollution that AONBs are characterised by dark skies, and this should be conserved and enhanced, and that where possible lighting should be avoided. The existing lighting columns to the south of the site on the top of the hill already have a visual impact on the landscape, seen in daylight and at night when the lights are operational, and clearly visible from the M4 and numerous other vantage points. Although the proposed lights will be located near to the bottom of the valley and are

designed to focus light downwards onto the courts, ultimately they still introduce light into an otherwise dark landscape. The existing lights should not be used as justification for further lighting, as any increase in light pollution in this area would be unacceptable and the proposed lighting would spread the impact of development further into the countryside and AONB.

6.2.11 With regard to the existing floodlights at the top of the hill to the south of the application site members may recall debating the merits of such lighting in 2006. These floodlights are 13m in height, compared to 8m under this application, and are powered by 2kW bulbs, compared to the current proposed 1kW bulbs. As the existing floodlights are intended to focus on an all weather pitch, used for various sports, the angle, intensity and high of the columns and light was necessary. In comparison the proposed floodlights are angled flat to the ground to minimise views of the light source from the surrounding area. The proposed site is lower in the valley than the existing floodlights, and it is appreciated that there will be less of an impact than the existing lights. However, as outlined above it would still introduce new lighting, at a quantity of 24 columns and therefore significantly increase the amount of light generated by the overall College site. The applicants have offered to provide additional landscaping to the existing sports pitch to aid in limiting the impact of the existing floodlights. This is not key to the consideration of the current scheme, and could not be secured through any approval of this scheme, though is of benefit.

6.2.12 Overall, while the issue of the proposal's impact on the character of the area and AONB is balanced due to the positive comments of the Landscape Architect and AONB Board, the spread of development beyond the settlement boundary and defined edge of the College is considered to have a detrimental impact on the character of the area, AONB and setting of the Conservation Area. The external lighting would introduce a new vertical element with the 24 columns, and increase lighting in an otherwise dark landscape in a sensitive rural area.

6.3 The impact on ecology and biodiversity

6.3.1 The River Pang valley is a known corridor of bat activity, and thus the application is supported by a Phase 1 Survey and bat survey. The Council's ecologist does not object to the application subject to appropriate conditions. There is now no objection to the operation of the floodlights until 10pm, unlike the previous application. Various conditions have been suggested by the ecologist, and in the event of approval these are considered reasonable to protect existing protected species.

6.4 The impact on highway safety

6.4.1 The highways authority does not object to the proposal on the basis of any harm to highway safety. The existing access into the sports centre would be utilised, and there would be reliance on the existing car park which has capacity. The highways authority does note that at times the car park is at or near capacity. Permission has been approved under 14/01554/FUL for 17 parking spaces, and whilst officers did not permit the increase of parking based on the application for the tennis courts it was recognised that the College generally has seen greater use than when the car park was originally constructed. The additional spaces would aid at times when the

car parking is at particular pressure. The additional spaces created on site would be for disabled users which would assist disabled people to use the facility.

6.5 The impact on neighbour amenity

6.5.1 The site is some 300-450 metres to residential properties, and there is no direct overlooking. Environmental health officers comment that the external lighting would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity, and that there would be no light spillage to affect living conditions.

6.6 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

6.6.1 The NPPF has introduced a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which paragraph 197 advises should be applied in assessing and determining development proposals.

6.6.2 In support of the economic dimension, paragraph 7 of the NPPF outlines that the economy would benefit by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places. As outlined in the body of the report the site extends beyond the settlement boundary and beyond the current boundary of Bradfield College. Bradfield is not a sustainable location, and by locating development for a regional standard sports facility which would be used by existing members and could attract new members, would increase travel by private car. There are no alternative methods of transport, and therefore the proposal does not facilitate sustainable travel. In support of the social role, the proposal would provide enhanced sporting and recreational facilities, and provide Green Infrastructure. However, as outlined above although this aim is generally supported in the district such facilities do need to be located in appropriate locations, and in the absence of a site selection process which would have been useful to support the chosen site, the proposal is not considered to be sufficiently justified. In consideration of the environmental role, the site is in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and on an existing agricultural field adjacent to the Bradfield Conservation Area and main settlement of Bradfield. The spread of development, and the additional lighting, are considered to have an adverse impact upon the AONB, and character of the area and setting of the Conservation Area. This is despite the mitigation and design of the courts. Further lighting would be added to this otherwise dark landscape, notwithstanding the existing flood and street lighting already present in Bradfield, and position at the base of the valley.

6.6.3 It is not considered that the proposal represents sustainable development.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Having taken into account all the relevant policy considerations and the other material considerations the proposed development is not considered to contribute to the aims of delivering sustainable development. While there are benefits in expanding an existing sports centre and providing a regional standard sports facility Bradfield is inherently unsustainable and the development would attract further movements, which would almost entirely be made by private car. There would be harm to the character and amenity of the AONB and the positive aspects of the proposal and the mitigation are not sufficient to outweigh the demonstrable harm to the strategic aims of National Planning Guidance and development plan policies

which seek to protect the character and amenity of AONBs and general character of the area and Conservation Areas.

8. FULL RECOMMENDATION

DELEGATE to the Head of Planning & Countryside to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION** for the reason set out in Section 8.1.

8.1 Recommended refusal reasons

1. The application site is located on agricultural land outside of the current boundaries of Bradfield College and adjacent to the defined settlement boundary of Bradfield, and therefore in the countryside. Sporting facilities are encouraged by the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS18 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026). Policy ADPP1 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) outlines that the main urban areas will be the focus for most development, including leisure uses where the extent and capacity of supporting infrastructure, services and facilities are the greatest. Policy CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) and Policy TRANS1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007 seeks to reduce the need to travel and maximise use of sustainable travel. Such aims are supported by the National Planning Policy Framework and West Berkshire's Local Transport Plan 2011-2026. Bradfield is not a sustainable location, with limited travel choices other than the private car and a infrequent bus service. As the proposed tennis courts, which owing to the type of court and floodlighting, will be unique to West Berkshire and be or a regional standard they would attract movements from existing users of the Bradfield Sports Centre and attract new members and users who would otherwise travel to other clay tennis courts. Thus, the further intensification of the use of the tennis centre would result in increasing the number of car trips to a remote and unsustainable site. Alternative location considerations have not be adequately evidenced to satisfactorily justify the choice of site.

The proposal therefore fails to comply with guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), the National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014), Policies ADPP1 and CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), Policy TRANS1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007), and West Berkshire's Local Transport Plan 2011-2026.

2. The application site is located outside of the current boundaries of Bradfield College and adjacent to the defined settlement boundary of Bradfield, and therefore in the countryside, and in a sensitive and exposed position within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is open to view from a number of vantage points. The proposal would introduce development in a currently open and undisturbed area of land, free from external lighting. The Newbury District-wide Landscape Character Assessment 1993 recommends that in the Pang Valley the extension of villages into the surrounding farmland should be resisted, and fields of pasture are a key characteristic of the area. Despite the design of the courts and associated infrastructure and the additional landscaping it is considered that the proposed development will have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area, AONB and

setting of the Bradfield Conservation Area through the spread of development. The site will continue to be visible from public viewpoints including Pangbourne Road, Dark Lane and footpath BRAD/28/2, despite the additional landscaping. Even with the screening further development of the countryside and AONB would have an urbanising effect, and such an argument that the site is well screened could be repeated too often to the detriment of the qualities of the countryside and in particular the AONB. The positive aspects of the scheme, in respect of the provision of enhanced sporting facilities, would not outweigh the harm to the character, appearance and qualities of the countryside, AONB and setting of the Conservation Area.

The proposal therefore fails to comply with guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), the National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014), Policies ADPP5, CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), West Berkshire Council's Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006), North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2009-2014), North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2002, Newbury District-wide Landscape Character Assessment 1993, and the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003.

- 3 24 light columns at 8 metres in height are proposed and would introduce light into an otherwise dark and undisturbed landscape. Although the columns would be placed on an area of land towards the bottom of the valley and would reduce light spillage the proposal is not considered to preserve the dark night skies. The existing lighting in Bradfield is focused in the village, and the floodlighting on the all weather pitch adjacent to Faulkners and the House on the Hill already have a detrimental impact on light spillage and intrusion into the dark skies and it is considered that any further intensification of this light spillage would be unacceptable.

The proposal therefore fails to comply with guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Policies ADPP5, CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), Policy OVS5 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 Saved Policies 2007, West Berkshire Council's Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006), North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2009-2014), North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2002, Newbury District-wide Landscape Character Assessment 1993, and the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2003.