

**Planning Committee**  
23 July 2014

**Reference:**  
**APP/14/00310**

**Area Team:**  
**North Team**

**Case Officer:**  
**Mrs C Parker**

**Ward:**  
**Leasowe and  
Moreton East**

**Location:**  
**Proposal:**

Solar Campus, 235 LEASOWE ROAD, LEASOWE, CH45 8LW  
The creation of four full size football pitches plus one junior academy pitch and one training area, fenced around the perimeter for the use by Tranmere Rovers FC as their formal training site. Creation of two full size football pitches and one youth pitch to the west of the site for local community use (**Amended plans, revised layout of pitches**)

**Applicant:**  
**Agent :**

Tranmere Rovers Football Club  
STRI

**Site Plan:**



**Development Plan allocation and policies:**

Washland  
Site of Biological Importance  
Green Belt  
Primarily Residential Area  
Green Belt  
Road Corridor subject to Environmental Improvement

**Planning History:**

Location: Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council, Solar Campus, 235 LEASOWE ROAD, LEASOWE, CH45 8LW  
Application Type: Work for Council by Council  
Proposal: Demolition of existing timber built store shed and re-configuration of car parking.  
Application No: DPP3/13/01210  
Decision Date: 07/11/2013  
Decision Type: Approve

Solar Campus , 235 Leasowe Road, Leasowe, Wirral, CH45 8LW  
Application Type: Work for Council by Council  
Proposal: Provision of a multi-use games area rear of the solar block  
Application No: APP/05/07780  
Decision Date: 10/03/2006  
Decision Type: Approve

**Summary Of Representations and Consultations Received:****REPRESENTATIONS:**

Having regard to the Council Guidance on Publicity for Applications, 397 notifications were sent to adjoining properties and a site notice was also displayed. At the time of writing this report 5 representations supporting the proposal have been received and 22 representations objection to the proposal have been received. The objections are summarised as follows:

1. Parking issues on Leasowe Road
2. Residents parking should not be affected
3. Problems with footballs being kicked onto Leasowe Road
4. Pitches close to gardens in Shackleton Road
5. Problems with rubbish after current games that take place
6. Increase in noise and disturbance
7. Anti-social behaviour
8. Walkers use the site and footpaths
9. Reduction in property values
10. Problems with exiting the site onto Leasowe Road would lead to a back-up of traffic.
11. Proposed access will be too close to houses
12. Loss of common land
13. Lack of consultation with residents by Tranmere Rovers
14. Possible floodlights
15. The application would circumvent the Section 106 for Woodchurch and would a section 106 be applied for this site
16. The Ingleborough application should be linked to this proposal
17. Issues relating to the value and redevelopment costs and affordable housing need to be considered
18. Condition 19 attached to the previous proposal for Ingleborough Rd ensured that the replacement playing field would be implemented before any development was commenced at Ingleborough Road. This was a specific requirement of Sport England whose approval is required for the new proposal and should not be allowed to be replaced by setting aside sum of money to carry out work at Solar Campus at a later date.
19. The report to Sport England include issues relating to Ingleborough site that are erroneous -

relating to the historic features and historical significance in that it registered with the UK National Inventory of War Memorials

20. Current specification of facilities and ground is insufficient to meet the needs of Sport England
21. Changing facilities are insufficient to replace the facilities at Ingleborough
22. No provision of floodlighting
23. Site access is inadequate
24. Youth playing pitch is too close to the proposed car park.

Amended plans were received showing a revision on the layout of the pitches and 4 letters were received reiterating the above objections

A petition of objection has been received containing 38 signatures and state concern that the proposal would cause considerable loss of amenity to residents of Heyes Drive and have an adverse effect on the residential amenity of neighbours, by reason of noise and disturbance and the visual impact of the development. The proposed access from Leasowe Road will also adversely affect highway safety.

Merseyside Cycling Campaign - There should be a provision of cycle parking facilities

#### CONSULTATIONS

Head of Environment and Regulation (Traffic and Transportation Division) - no objection subject to conditions

Head of Environment and Regulation (Pollution Control) - no objection

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service - An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required

Environment Agency - No objection subject to condition

Sport England - No objection subject to a Section 106 Agreement and planning condition.

Merseytravel - The proposal should not impede bus services and a travel plan should be created.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue - Access for fire appliances should comply with building regulations, water supplies for fire fighting should be risk assessed and be capable of delivering a minimum flow of 20-75 litres per second. Premises should comply with Section 55 of the County of Merseyside Act 1980

Wirral Wildlife - Environment Agency should be consulted. The site is in close proximity to the River Birket and there is concern that the drainage from the site may pollute the river, therefore a suitable drainage scheme should be provided taking advice from the Environment Agency. The proposed fencing should be at least 8m back from the flood relief channel and state that a "high profile scheme such as this is seen to respect the environment and biodiversity".

#### **DIRECTORS COMMENTS:**

#### **REASON FOR REFERRAL TO PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The proposal is to be considered in parallel with OUT/12/00824 – Residential Development at land at Ingleborough Road, which is also reported to Planning Committee.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The proposal is for the creation of four full sized football pitches, one junior academy pitch, one training area and the creation of two full size football pitches and youth pitch for community use. It is proposed that Tranmere Rovers Football Club (TRFC) will relocate their training pitch facilities to the Solar Campus site from Ingleborough Road, Prenton. The intention is to develop the site at Solar Campus to ensure adequate additional and compensatory sports field provision as well as the training facility for TRFC.

The application is submitted in parallel with the reopened application OUT/12/00824, which is an outline application for residential development. The application for residential development was

approved subject to a Section 106 Agreement that was linked to a previous proposal for training facilities and replacement playing fields at Woodchurch Leisure Centre (APP/12/00825). The Woodchurch site is no longer being considered as the training facility with associated pitches for TRFC. As such the previous outline application at Ingleborough Road has been reopened with a view to provide the training facilities and replacement playing fields at the site of the Solar Campus (subject of this proposal).

### **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

The site is open grassland located at the rear of the Solar Campus Educational Facility, Leasowe Road and is within the Green Belt. There are houses to the north in Heyes Drive adjacent to the Solar Campus and houses that bound the site to the south in Ross Avenue and to the southwest on Shackleton Road. The site is open as it fronts on to Leasowe Road with the primary school on the west corner of Leasowe Road and Gardenside. The eastern most side of the site bounds the A554 with a grass bund to the southeast that separates the site from the River Birket.

### **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

The application site is designated as Green Belt and the site currently comprises playing fields. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 89 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development but lists exceptions to this. One exception is the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation as long as it preserves the openness of the green belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This is echoed in the Unitary Development Plan policies as set out below.

Policy GB2 - Development in the Green Belt and RE13 - Criteria for Sports Facilities in the Green Belt of the Unitary Development Plan establish the criteria to be considered for development in the Green Belt. Policy REC1 states that proposals for sport and outdoor recreation outside the urban area will be restricted to facilities which preserve the openness of the green belt. Policy GB2 states that essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation are appropriate development in the Green Belt, so long as they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Policy RE13 states that proposals for outdoor sport and recreation will be permitted in the green belt where adequate provision has been made for highway access and the visual impact of the proposals would not be intrusive within the local landscape and the openness of the green belt should be preserved. Any associated buildings will be allowed where they are essential to the use of the proposal and where their scale, siting, design and external appearance are appropriate to the setting of the area. The proposal includes a changing room facility accommodated within a modular building. The provision of the changing rooms is considered an essential facility to support the use of the playing fields and the scale and design will not harm the openness of the green belt. The proposal, in principle, is therefore in accordance with the NPPF and the relevant UDP Policies REC1, GB2 and RE13.

The Solar Campus building is Grade II Listed Building. UDP Policy CH01 considers the protection of heritage and states that proposals should pay particular attention to the protection of buildings and other features of architectural or historic importance. Policy CH1 considers development that affects Listed Buildings and structures and states that proposals should be a scale appropriate to retaining the character and design of the listed building and its setting. It is considered that the proposed playing fields and changing room facilities do not detract from the character or setting of the listed Solar Campus building.

Development Management Policies in the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton are also applicable. Policy WM8 requires development to incorporate measures for achieving efficient use of resources, Policy WM9 also requires development to provide measures for waste collection and recycling, including home composting.

### **APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES**

The site extends to 20.4 hectares in area and currently comprises four sports pitches and grassland. The proposals would create 2.82 hectares of additional sports pitch provision and built facility for changing rooms along with a 50 space car parking area within the north eastern part of the site (adjacent to the Solar Campus buildings). The access would be via an existing right of way from Leasowe Road.

Four full sized pitches and a training area will be located to the east of the site and will be developed on open grassland. The submitted information states that this area of land is not currently in a state fit for sporting play. The intention is to upgrade this area for pitches with a high and moderate specification for play. The pitches will be bounded by fencing and used by Tranmere Rovers Football Club. To the north of this area and to the south of the Solar Campus buildings the changing facilities and car park will be located with the access via a public right of way from Leasowe Road. The access currently provides access to the side of the Solar Campus site and runs adjacent to the houses fronting onto Leasowe Road and Heyes Drive. Objections have been received about the access as it is inadequate and the current parking problems in the area. The access will utilise a public right of way and although its use may increase as a result of the proposal, the intention is to increase the width of the access in order to improve highway safety. This and additional highway issues are discussed below under the Highway/Traffic Implications. Residents have highlighted that the current use of the site as playing fields attract car borne visitors which causes both parking and congestion issues in the locality. This appears to be an ongoing issue and it is likely that demand for car parking may increase as a result of the proposal however, a car park is proposed within the site which is considered will alleviate any additional demand (when compared to the current situation) for on street parking.

The site currently comprises informal pitches located centrally within the site. The proposal seeks to provide three pitches in the western area of the site, which would be closer to the boundary with houses in Shackleton Road compared to the existing pitches. Although the pitches would be closer in proximity to the houses and some objections have been received in this regard, there would be no significant loss of amenity to the occupiers of these houses mainly as the site is open to the public at the moment and football matches take place currently. Objections have been received about anti-social behaviour, including litter problems. This appears to be a problem currently and there is no evidence that this will increase as a result of upgrading the existing pitches on the site. In addition noise and disturbance due to anti-social behaviour is a police matter.

Objections have been received about the possibility of nuisance due to flood lights. The applicant has confirmed that the proposal does not include the provision of floodlights and as such is not considered as part of this proposal. Should the proposal be approved, the provision of flood lights in the future would be subject of a separate planning application and considered on its merits at that time.

The land is open grassland and often used by walkers and cyclists. Other than the formal public right of way that will be the access to the site from Leasowe Road, there are no public rights of way within the site. Although used by members of the public the site is not defined as common land. That said, informal routes are used to cross the site along with a cycle route to the south of the site that follows the contour of the River Birket. The proposal and provision of the pitches will not affect these routes in that there will be routes kept open and available for walkers and cyclists to cross the site as is the current situation.

Concerns have been raised about the need to link the proposal to the site at Ingleborough Road and that a Section 106 should be imposed as it was previously when the site at Woodchurch was being considered. This principle would be applied for this proposal therefore linking this development to the proposal for residential development at Ingleborough Road subject of a separate planning application OUT/12/00824 which will be considered concurrently with this proposal.

Sport England are statutory consultee and have assessed the proposed development. The applicant has submitted a range of documents, including an Agronomic Assessment, which provides confirmation of existing ground conditions and playing quality at the site. The purpose of the Assessment is to demonstrate that there will be both an equivalent or better quantity as well as quality replacement pitch provision at the site. The submitted documents provide the level of information required to satisfy Sport England and the Local Planning Authority that the proposed development will maintain a quantity of playing field provision at the site (as well as replacing playing field land at Ingleborough Road, Prenton, considered under parallel application OUT/12/00824). A series of conditions are proposed to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the detail provided. In addition, method statements for maintenance, proposed community use and sports development will need to be fully incorporated into a section 106 Legal Agreement should Members be minded to approve the development.

## **SEPARATION DISTANCES**

Separation distances do not apply in this instance.

## **HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS**

The submission includes a "Traffic Management Statement" analysing the potential vehicle movements related to the development, which indicates peak movements of 30 vehicles per hour (vph) during certain hours on a Sunday and 15vph on other days. Whilst there is no evidence to support or refute these figures, given the size of the proposed car park and the number of pitches, it is likely that this is a conservative estimate and that actual numbers would probably be higher.

Therefore, for highway safety reasons, it is considered that the access from Leasowe Road should be widened to accommodate two-way traffic in order to prevent conflicting traffic at the narrow entrance queuing back onto Leasowe Road. This could be obtained by a suitably worded planning condition.

In addition, observations as well as objections received from local residents, indicate that a significant proportion of vehicles leaving the Solar Campus carry out a "U" turn manoeuvre at the Junction of Leasowe Road / Hayes Drive, which occasionally conflicts with other traffic. The number of vehicles carrying out this manoeuvre is likely to increase if the development goes ahead, increasing the risk of conflict. As this is considered to be detrimental to highway safety, a planning condition is recommended to implement a "no U-turn" traffic regulation order at that junction for highway safety reasons. Similarly, a planning condition to implement a "no U-turn" traffic regulation order at the junction of Leasowe Road / Cross Lane is recommended for the same reasons.

Subject to the suggested planning conditions, it is considered that there are no sustainable highway reasons to refuse this application.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES**

It is considered that there are no significant detrimental impacts to nature conservation. The creation of the new pitches is considered to have potential to improve the sustainability of the site by utilising the site.

Environmental Impact Assessment is a procedure by which the environmental profile of projects likely to give rise to significant environmental effects are subjected to rigorous examination through a structured process. The process derives from a European Directive (the 'EIA Directive') and is given legal force in England through Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. Screening is the initial part of the process whereby a determination is made of whether a project should be subject to EIA or not. To govern this determination, the Regulations provide a classification of types of development, presented in two 'Schedules'. Projects listed in Schedule 1 that meet the stated qualifying criteria or thresholds always require EIA. Schedule 2 projects require EIA if they are considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects. Projects not listed in either Schedule are not subject to EIA.

An initial examination of this proposal against the Regulations shows that it does not fall within Schedule 1. It is also not immediately apparent that it falls neatly into one of the project categories provided by Schedule 2. However, there is clear case law directing that the screening of projects should interpret the classification of developments with the 'narrow scope and broad purpose' of the EIA Directive in mind. In order to conform to this principle, this proposal is considered to fall within Schedule 2, paragraph 10(b) of the EIA Regulations 2011 which is within the general category of 'Infrastructure Projects', covering urban development projects including sports centre developments. For such projects the Regulations require screening of development over 0.5ha in extent. As this project covers 20.4ha screening is therefore required.

Determining the need for EIA for Schedule 2 projects is undertaken on a case-by-case basis taking into account the likelihood of their '*having significant environmental effects because of factors such as its size, nature or location*' (Circular 02/99, para 28). Schedule 3 of the Regulations provides a selection of criteria to assist with this determination. Guidance suggests that EIA is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale, the types of impact are markedly different, or there is a high degree of contamination. In this case, the proposal includes the redevelopment of an existing playing field site for continued operation for

that purpose on an improved and more intensive basis. The scheme involves the creation of an additional 2.82ha of playing pitches and will include the provision of a 'changing village' with 50 car parking spaces and security fencing for the part of the site to be used by Tranmere Rovers. The scheme will improve the quality of the site for sports pitches by improving drainage arrangements and developing specialised soil profiles for playing surfaces. However, the essential character of the site will remain playing pitches.

Although the proposals represent a growth in the scale of the use of the site, this will be from a low intensity base and will have some positive effects in terms of improved quality and quantity of sports pitch provision available for community use. The amount of built development is small and activity levels during both the construction and operational phase is considered unlikely to be a source of significant environmental effects. The location of the site is not 'sensitive' as defined by Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations despite the proximity of the Old Birket local wildlife site, as that level of designation is not a special factor for EIA Screening. Therefore considering the proposals in terms of their nature, scale and location in the context of the EIA Regulations 2011 and associated Guidance it is concluded that the scheme is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and EIA is accordingly not required in this case

### **HEALTH ISSUES**

Beyond the potential positive health benefits of enhanced sporting provision, there are no significant health implications relating to this application.

### **CONCLUSION**

The proposal would have no detrimental impact to the character of the area or residential amenity and represents an investment in sport and recreational facilities. The proposal would meet identifying quantitative and qualitative needs for community pitch sport, and provide for the rationalization and modernization of Tranmere Rovers' training and Centre of Excellence operations in the Borough. The development is considered appropriate development in this Green Belt location and is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and Unitary Development Plan Policies GB2, REC1, RE13 and CH1 and is recommended accordingly.

### **Summary of Decision:**

Having regards to the individual merits of this application the decision to grant Planning Permission has been taken having regards to the relevant Policies and Proposals in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2000) and all relevant material considerations including national and regional policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following:-

The proposal would have no detrimental impact to the character of the area or residential amenity and represents an investment in sport and recreational facilities. The proposal would meet identifying quantitative and qualitative needs for community pitch sport, and provide for the rationalization and modernization of Tranmere Rovers' training and Centre of Excellence operations in the Borough. The development is considered appropriate development in this Green Belt location and is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and Unitary Development Plan Policies GB2, REC1, RE13 and CH1 and is recommended accordingly.

### **Recommended Subject to a Section 106 Agreement Decision:**

#### **Recommended Conditions and Reasons:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

**Reason:** To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 25 June 2014 and listed as follows:

drawing number IN104271-P003-B, IN104271 - P001A, IN104271-P002-B, IN104271-P006-A, IN104271-P005-A, IN104271-P004-B dated 18 June 2014 and IN104271-P010 dated 10 July 2014.

**Reason:** For the avoidance of doubt and to define the permission.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to limit the surface water run-off generated by the proposed development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

**Reason:** To prevent the increased risk of flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.

4. Details of all fencing, walls, gateways and means of enclosure shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before the development hereby approved is commenced. The works shall be carried out in full prior to first occupation of the site for the use hereby permitted, in accordance with the details so approved.

**Reason:** To ensure a proper standard of separation from, and standard of appearance with respect to neighbouring property, character, and having regard to the need to Design Out Crime.

5. No part of the development shall be brought into use until space and facilities for cycle parking of a type and in a location previously submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority have been provided and these facilities shall be permanently retained thereafter.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety and to accord with Policy TR12 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

6. Before any construction commences, samples of the materials to be used in the external surfaces of the changing room building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved materials shall then be used in the construction of the development.

**Reason:** To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in the interests of visual amenity and to comply with Policy RE1 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

7. No development shall commence until details of the design and layout of the natural turf pitches, artificial grass pitch and changing rooms have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt, the design and layout of the sports facilities shall comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, published by the National Governing Body for Football. The natural turf pitches, artificial grass pitch and changing rooms shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable and to accord with Unitary Development Plan Policies REC1, RE1 and the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 74.

8. Within 6 months of the first occupation of the development for the use hereby approved, a full Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The provisions of the Travel Plan shall be implemented and operated in accordance with the timetable contained therein unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety and sustainability, having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework.



9. No development shall take place until a Site Waste Management Plan, confirming how demolition and construction waste will be recovered and re-used on the site or at other sites, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Plan shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that the proposed development would include the re-use of limited resources, and to ensure that the amount of waste for landfill is reduced to accord with policy WM8 of the Waste Local Plan.

10. Prior to first use of the development, arrangements for the storage and disposal of refuse, and vehicle access thereto, shall be made within the curtilage of the site, in accordance with details to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure a satisfactory appearance and adequate standards of hygiene and refuse collection, having regard to Waste Local Plan Policy WM9.

11. No part of the development shall be commenced until a scheme of works showing access improvements from Leasowe Road to allow for two-way traffic has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved works shall be completed prior to the use of the access unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety and to accord with Policy RE13 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

12. The development shall not be commenced until a detailed scheme of highway improvement works for the provision of traffic signs stating no U-turn and the junction of Leasowe Road and Heyes Drive and at the junction of Leasowe Road and Cross Lane together with a programme for the completion of the works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the development shall be brought into use until the required highway improvement works have been constructed in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety and to accord with Policy RE13 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

13. No development shall commence until a scheme which sets out management arrangements for the use of the car parking and changing facilities to serve the community pitches in the west of the application site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (after consultation with Sport England). The car parking and changing provision shall thereafter be managed in accordance with the approved scheme

**Reason:** To ensure the proposed community pitches are served by ancillary provision and are fit for use in accordance with the NPPF and UDP Policies REC1 and RE13.

#### **Further Notes for Committee:**

1. In order to comply with Condition 12, the applicant is advised that it will be necessary to obtain a Traffic Regulation Order and is advised to contact the Council's Traffic and Transportation Department.
2. This proposal does not include any provision of floodlighting and the applicant is advised that separate planning permission will be required. The separate planning application for any floodlighting shall include details of the areas of illumination and fittings. The details shall confirm that the installation and operation of the lighting will comply with the Institution of Lighting Professionals 'Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (GN01:2011)'.

**Last Comments By:** 03/06/2014 17:28:44  
**Expiry Date:** 06/06/2014