

# Planning Committee

20 January 2015

**Reference:**  
**APP/14/01313**

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

**Case Officer:**  
**Mrs S Day**

**Ward:**  
**Claughton**

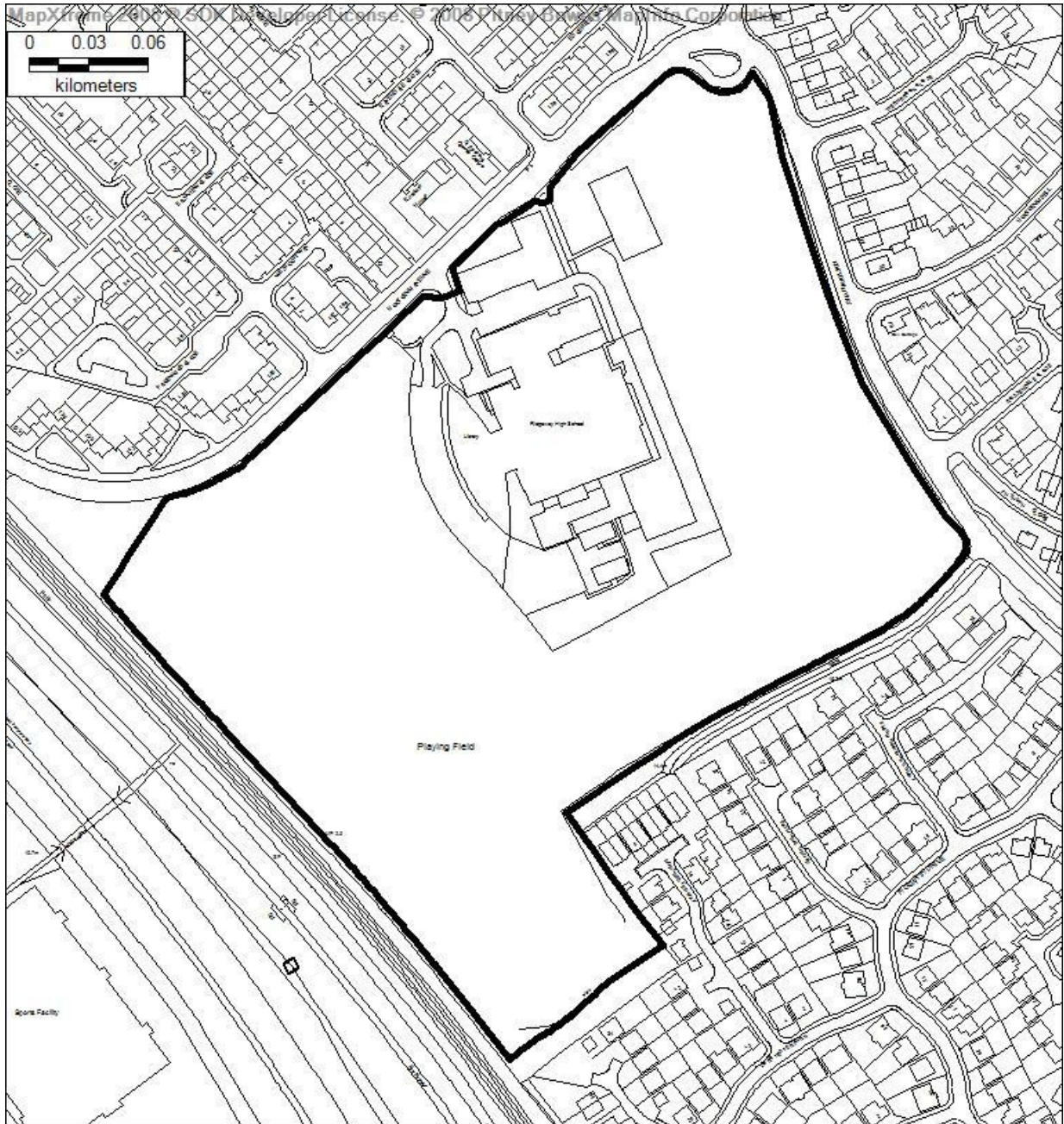
**Location:**  
**Proposal:**

Ridgeway High School, NOCTORUM AVENUE, NOCTORUM, CH43 9EB  
New three storey Secondary school building with new separate Sports Hall.  
Provision of associated landscaping works, sprinkler tank facility, car & cycle parking, fencing, lighting and CCTV facilities. Demolition of existing school building following completion of new school building.

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

Morgan Sindall PLC  
HLMAD

## Site Plan:



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**Development Plan allocation and policies:**

School Playing Field  
Primarily Residential Area

**Planning History:**

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum. L43 9EB  
Application Type: Full Planning Permission  
Proposal: Erection of a ships container for use as an office.  
Application No: APP/94/05960  
Decision Date: 16/02/1995  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School ,Noctorum Avenue ,Noctorum ,L43 9EB  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Erection of 2m high steel security fence.  
Application No: DPP/84/25586  
Decision Date: 01/11/1984  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum. L43 9EB  
Application Type: Work for Council by Council  
Proposal: Erection of 2.1m. high palisade fence and gates.  
Application No: APP/85/07082  
Decision Date: 16/01/1986  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum, Wirral, CH43 9EB  
Application Type: Work for Council by Council  
Proposal: Erection of an extension to provide music and drama rooms.  
Application No: APP/02/06029  
Decision Date: 23/07/2002  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum, Wirral, CH43 9EB  
Application Type: Work for Council by Council  
Proposal: Erection of a two storey City Learning Centre with covered link to existing school  
Application No: APP/01/07029  
Decision Date: 14/12/2001  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue ,Noctorum,L43 9  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Erection of a double mobile classroom unit.  
Application No: DPP/83/21967  
Decision Date: 03/03/1983  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue,Noctorum,L43 9R  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Extensions and alterations to existing school building.  
Application No: DPP/83/22251  
Decision Date: 14/04/1983  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum, L43 9EB  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Erection of a mobile classroom unit  
Application No: DPP/80/16357

Decision Date: 29/09/1980  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School ,Noctorum Avenue ,Noctorum ,L43 9EB  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Erection of a mobile classroom unit  
Application No: DPP/78/10022  
Decision Date: 26/06/1978  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School ,Noctorum Avenue ,Noctorum ,L43 9EB  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Construction of hard surfaced kickabout area, erection of 4 x 8 metre high floodlighting columns and 3.8 metre high boundary fence.  
Application No: DPP/84/25219  
Decision Date: 23/08/1984  
Decision Type: Approve

Location: Ridgeway High School, Noctorum Avenue, Noctorum, L43 9SA  
Application Type: Deemed  
Proposal: Single Storey community centre  
Application No: DPP/83/24043  
Decision Date: 19/01/1984  
Decision Type: Approve

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

#### REPRESENTATIONS

In line with the Councils policy for publicity of planning applications, letters were sent to 72 individual properties and a notice posted on site. In addition the application was also advertised in the press. Objections have been received from 11,15, 17, 21, Knightsbridge Court, 17 Balmoral Grove ,8,11,14 Dorchester Way .One letter of support has been received from 141 Noctorum Avenue .In addition a qualifying petition of 69 signatures has been received. The objections can be summarised as follows:

1. Three storey building will be too close to houses to the south of the site and will result in noise and light pollution
2. Loss of privacy to houses to the south of the site
3. Concern that an access along the southern boundary may be brought into use
4. Increase in hours school will be open will increase disturbance
5. School consultation exercise did not include all neighbours.

#### CONSULTATIONS

**Sport England** - No objection subject to conditions

**Head of Environment & Regulation (Pollution Control Division)** -No objections subject to conditions relating to lighting

**Wirral Wildlife** - No objection subject to conditions relating to position of lighting, time period for tree works and enhanced biodiversity works.

#### **Director's Comments:**

Consideration of this item was deferred from Planning Committee on 18 December 2014 to allow for a Members Site Visit.

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

A qualifying petition signed by 69 signatures has been received. Under the provisions of the approved Scheme of Delegation for Determining Planning Applications this application is required to be considered by the Planning Committee

## **INTRODUCTION**

The application relates to the demolition of the existing school building and the erection of a new three storey school with a new sports hall. The new buildings will be positioned to the south of the existing school buildings to enable building work to take place whilst the existing school remains in use. The school will continue to use the existing access from Noctorum Avenue to the north of the school. The parking areas remain as existing with the site of the existing school buildings turned into a central green area. The new sports building is to be located between the existing and proposed school buildings.

## **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

The application site is within a primarily residential area with a specific allocation as a school playing field. Development which results in the loss of playing field can be acceptable if adequate alternative provision is to be made.

## **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

The application site consists of the existing Ridgeway school. The existing school buildings sit in the centre of a large area of open space with playing field to the east west and south of the buildings.

The site slopes down from west to east, with the school buildings located on the relatively flat central section of the land.

The existing buildings are located in a cluster in the centre of the site. The school was built in the 1970's and the buildings are predominantly two storey flat roofed concrete structures which appear in need of renovation. A more recent curved community building (CLC) is located to the east of the main school buildings. This operates separately to the school and has its own parking area.

The site is bounded by the M53 to the west and surrounded on the remaining three sides by houses. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the school is taken from the north of the buildings onto Noctorum Avenue. This consists of the main vehicle/pedestrian access with a further pedestrian access to the north east.

The school has a number of existing sport facilities which includes three grass pitches and a running track to the west of the buildings and a football pitch, training grid, rounders pitch and a floodlit MUGA to the east. There are also more informal play areas around the buildings to the south. The existing sports hall is located within the school buildings and currently is available for community use.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

As the school site is washed over by a playing field designation, consideration must be given firstly to policies which seek to protect school playing fields. The position of the new school building would result in the loss of a small area of grass playing field but would not result in the loss of any existing grass pitches. The replacement sports facilities are of a higher quality, or at least equivalent to the facilities lost. On this basis Sport England do not object to the proposals, subject to conditions.

NPPF section 8 advises on the issue of promoting healthy communities. It advises that decisions should aim to achieve facilities which deliver community facilities and shared spaces and that great weight is given to the need to create, expand or alter schools and support opportunities for sport and recreation.

As the development is surrounded by primarily residential uses, the proposals should also satisfy the requirements of UDP Policy HS15, which relates to non-residential uses in primarily residential areas. This policy supports proposals which will be in scale with the surroundings and not cause nuisance or result in a detrimental change in the character of the area.

The proposed school buildings are higher than the existing school buildings and are closer to the southern boundary of the site. Whilst this brings the school closer to the residential properties to the south, the buildings are still a t 48m, a substantial distance away. No increase in pupil capacity is proposed and as such no increase in noise ,disturbance or parking is anticipated during normal school hours.

## **APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES**

The proposed redevelopment of Ridgeway High School forms part of the Education Funding Authority's Priority School Building Programme. This aims to provide purpose built schools for those in most urgent need of repair.

The existing site consists of a variety of different structures as the school has expanded on an ad hoc basis. These buildings now are old and inefficient and do not provide a modern learning environment.

Access between many of the buildings on site is achieved externally, with pupils and staff moving between buildings in all weathers. The existing school has the capacity to accommodate 825 pupils. Although the number of pupils is currently lower than this, pupil numbers could increase without the need for planning permission. The proposed building would also have the capacity to accommodate 825 pupils should it be used to capacity this would represent an increase in pupils using the site.

The proposed school building consists of a single three storey school building containing new classrooms and new facilities for dining, drama and other activities. A separate sports hall which provides changing and sport facilities is to be located adjacent to the new school building. The design of the school is simple and efficient. External materials will consist of brickwork, render and cladding. The new building will be energy efficient and accessible allowing a more efficient circulation of pupils and staff and modern teaching facilities.

Whilst the existing school is located within a large area of open space, in reality much of this land is not available for development. The land to the west and east is used for sports pitches and in part is subject to restrictive covenants which prevent development. As such the remaining developable area of land lies to the immediate south of the existing school where the new building is proposed. This area is also bounded to the south by houses which has meant that care has been taken to site the new building as far into the site as possible.

In a typical residential development, the Council requires principle elevations of houses to be 21m apart where they are of the same height. Where the height of the new building is higher, this distance increases by 2m for every 1m increase in height. Thus a new three storey building would generally need to be at least 25 m away from an existing 2 storey house. This is to ensure privacy between properties. The proposed school building would be a minimum of 48m from the nearest houses on Knightsbridge Court and Balmoral Way and is approximately 4m higher. Thus an interface distance of 29m would be required as a minimum. The proposed distance of 48m is far in excess of the usual interface requirement and will ensure that the nearest dwellings maintain their privacy. In addition the landscaped area is to be enhanced which will provide a denser screen at ground level.

The existing school already is available for community use in the form of informal use of the pitches by up to 7 junior teams in the area. There are currently no restrictions on hours of operation at the school although it the adjacent CLC operates until 10pm during the week and up to 4pm on Sundays. It is intended that the school will develop a Community Use Agreement once the new development is operational. This will formalise the use of the facilities with local sporting clubs. The provision of a community facility and the increased opportunity for recreation and sport to the wider public is in line with guidance in NPPF and is similar to activities undertaken in schools across the borough.

The proposals include lighting around the school. This takes the form of 4m high poles within the car parking area and floodlighting mounted at 3m height around the buildings. Whilst the lighting is not particularly high, the position and angle of lighting can be controlled by a condition to ensure that there is no spillage which would affect neighbouring houses.

### **SEPARATION DISTANCES**

The matter of separation distances is dealt with in the main body of the report.

### **HIGHWAY/TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed development does not result in an increase of the capacity of the school. As such the existing car parking spaces are to be retained with the accessible spaces to be relocated closer to the new school building. In addition, 100 secure cycle parking spaces will be provided.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES**

The school is committed to enhancing the existing ecology of the site. An ecological survey submitted with the application concluded that Whilst bats use the site, particularly the trees to the south for hunting, there is no evidence of bats roosting in the buildings. The enhancement to on site ecology would take the form of wild flower planting, a habitat garden, a food production area and boxes for bats and birds. The exact form of this could be subject to planning conditions.

### **HEALTH ISSUES**

There are no health implications relating to this application.

## **CONCLUSION .**

The proposals will result in a new school building which provides improved learning facilities and improved sports facilities. The buildings are positioned sufficiently far away from existing dwellings to ensure retention of privacy and no increase in noise and disturbance. The proposals comply with UDP Policy HS15 and guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework

### **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 proposals will result in a new school building which provides improved learning facilities and improved sports facilities. The buildings are positioned sufficiently far from existing dwellings to ensure retention of privacy and no increase in noise and disturbance. The proposals comply with UDP Policy HS15 and guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Recommended                      Approve**  
**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. Detailed drawings shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before any work is commenced to indicate the finished site and ground floor levels intended at the completion of the development in relation to the existing site levels and the levels of the adjoining land and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the details so approved. The gradients of any new road or turning area should not exceed 1:25 and those of parking or loading bays should not exceed 1:40.

**Reason:** To ensure that the development is satisfactorily sited and designed in relation to adjacent development and the highway and that satisfactory gradients are achieved.

3. Before any construction commences, samples of the facing and roofing materials to be used in the external construction of this development 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 HS15 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

4. NO DEVELOPMENT SHALL TAKE PLACE UNTIL details of secure parking provision for cycles have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such provision as may be approved shall be provided before the building(s) hereby permitted is/are occupied and shall be retained permanently thereafter.

**Reason:** In order to ensure adequate provision for cycle parking and to comply with Policy TR12 Requirements for Cycle Parking of the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

5. Within six months of the school being brought into use, a Travel Plan Shall be 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 to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework

6. Any illumination of signs, buildings, canopies and other features of the premises shall be diffused or baffled to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority to prevent any spread of direct light or glare over the public highway or into neighbouring properties.

**Reason:** To ensure that such illumination does not prejudice local amenities or safety on the neighbouring highway.

7. 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.

8. Notwithstanding the dimensions of the sports hall shown in information supporting the planning application, the sports hall and multi-use games area hereby permitted shall not be constructed other than substantially in accordance with Sport England / National Governing Body Technical Design Guidance Notes "Sports halls: Design and layouts' (Sports Hall), 'Floors for indoor sports'(Sports Hall) and 'Artificial surfaces for outdoor sports' (MUGA).

**Reason:** To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable.

9. Use of the development shall not commence until a community use agreement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England] , and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to indoor and outdoor sports facilities and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational establishment users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, and anything else which the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England considers necessary in order to secure the effective community use of the facilities. The development shall not be used at any time other than in strict compliance with the approved agreement.

**Reason:** To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facilities, and to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport.

10. Prior to the school being brought into use, details of the proposed enhanced biodiversity areas, the methods of enhancement shall and the timetable for the works shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the local Planning authority. The proposals shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** To ensure the proposals contribute to biodiversity.

11. No tree, shrub or hedgerow felling, or any vegetation management and/or cutting operations should take place during the period 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> August inclusive.

**Reason:** To protect birds during their breeding season and to comply with Policy NC5 in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

12. The hard and soft landscaping scheme hereby approved shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants that within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged or defective shall be replaced with others of a species, size

and number as originally approved in the first available planting season unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

**Reason:** In the interests of visual amenity and to comply with Policy GR5 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.

13. NO DEVELOPMENT SHALL TAKE PLACE (including any demolition works) UNTIL a Construction Management Plan or Construction Method Statement for the demolition and/or construction of the development hereby approved has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The demolition and construction works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Details submitted in respect of the method statement shall provide for routes for construction traffic, the provision of parking facilities for contractors and visitors during all stages of the development, hours of operation, the provision of a means of storage and/or delivery for all plant, site huts, site facilities and materials and shall provide for wheel cleaning facilities during the demolition, excavation, site preparation and construction stages of the development and/or method(s) of prevention of mud being carried onto the highway.

**Reason:** In the interests of the safe operation of the local highway network and having regards to visual and residential amenities of the area.

14. Construction of the development hereby approved shall not commence until full details of works to upgrade two bus stops on Noctorum Avenue fronting the development site have been submitted for approval in writing to the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety and the promotion of the use of sustainable transport.

15. Construction of the development hereby approved shall not commence until full details of works to improve traffic signs and road markings related to school safety in the vicinity of the development site have been submitted for approval in writing to the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety.

16. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 20/10/2014 and 10/12/2014 and listed as follows: KL 3171, KLC 0020, RHS-L(PL)003 B3, RHS-L(PL)007 B2, RHS-C1000 B2, RHS-A(PL)202 B2, RHS-A(PL)201 B2, RHS-A(PL)003 B2, RHS-A(PL)002 B2, RHS-A(PL)004 B2, RHS-A(PL)001 B2 , RHS-L(PL)004 B1, RHS-E-68-801 P2, RHS-E-63-301 P1, RHS-L(PL)002 B1, RHS-L(PL)001 B1, RHS-L(PL)006 B1, RHS-L(PL)005, RHS-A(PL)005 B1, RHS-A(PL)301 B1, RHS-A(PL)401 B1, LNBS0029\_T01 and RHS-A(PL)203 B1

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

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

**Last Comments By:** 03/12/2014 10:25:19

**Expiry Date:** 19/01/2015