

**Planning Committee**

**8 September 2020**

**Reference:  
APP/20/00012**

**Area Team:  
Development  
Management Team**

**Case Officer:  
Mr P Howson**

**Ward:  
Leasowe and  
Moreton East**

**Location:** Solar Campus, 235 Leasowe road, Wallasey, CH45 8RE  
**Proposal:** 3G sports pitch with external floodlighting  
**Applicant:** Tranmere Rovers FC  
**Agent:** SDA Architecture Limited

**Qualifying Petition:** Yes, Number of Signatures: 36

**Site Plan:**



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**Development Plan designation:**

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

**Planning History:**

Location: Solar Campus , 235 Leasowe Road, Leasowe, Wirral, CH45 8LW  
Application Type: Work for Council by Council  
Proposal: Erection of a single storey extension.  
Application No: APP/01/05216  
Decision Date: 01/06/2001  
Decision Type: Returned invalid

Location: Solar Campus , 235 Leasowe Road, Leasowe, Wirral, CH45 8LW  
Application Type: Listed Building Consent  
Proposal: Erection of a single storey extension  
Application No: LBC/01/05219  
Decision Date: 01/06/2001  
Decision Type: Returned invalid

Location: 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

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

Location: Solar Campus, 235 LEASOWE ROAD, LEASOWE, CH45 8LW  
Application Type: Full Planning Permission  
Proposal: 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)  
Application No: APP/14/00310  
Decision Date: 30/03/2015  
Decision Type: Approve

**Summary of Representations and Consultations Received:****1.0 WARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

1.1 No comments received.

**2.0 SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

## REPRESENTATIONS

Having regard to the Council's Guidance for Publicity on Planning Applications, 34 notifications were sent to neighbouring properties. At the time of writing 7 letters of representation comprising of 2 comments against and 5 objections have been received. A qualifying petition signed by 36 signatures has been received against the proposal. The objections can be summarised as follows:

- a) Impact on amenity
- b) Parking & Traffic

## CONSULTATIONS

**Leasowe Development Trust** – no comment

**Tree Officer** – no comment

**Wirral Wildlife** – no objection

**MEAS** – no objection

**Head of Environment & Regulation (Traffic and Transportation Division)** – no objection

**Environmental Protection** – no objection

**Environment Agency** – no objection

### **3.1 Reason for referral to Planning Committee**

3.1.1 A qualifying petition comprising of 36 signatures has been received against the proposal. As such, under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the application is to be determined by the Committee.

### **3.2 Site and Surroundings**

3.2.1 The development site comprises of an open grassed area utilised for recreational sport. Access into the site is via Leasowe Road in the north, where an area of hardstanding exists utilised for vehicle parking.

3.2.2 Along the eastern axis of the site are trees and shrubberies which screen the A554. To the south, a golf course, which is also partially designated as a Site of Biological Importance. To the west and north-west exists open sport and recreational space and a number of houses. North of the site (behind an intervening playing pitch) exists the Grade II listed Solar Building.

### **3.3 Proposed Development**

3.3.1 The application proposes to install an additional 3G sports pitch with external floodlighting.

### **3.4 Development Plan**

3.4.1 The Wirral Unitary Development Plan 2000

- GB2 Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt
- WA1 Development and Flood Risk
- WA2 Development and Land Drainage
- NC6 Sites of Biological Importance
- NC7 Species Protection
- REC1 Principles for Sport and Recreation
- RE9 Criteria for Floodlighting at Sports Facilities
- RE13 Criteria for Sports Facilities in the Green Belt
- TR9 Requirements for Off Street Parking

### **3.5 Other Material Planning Considerations**

#### 3.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- Achieving sustainable development
- Decision-making
- Achieving well-designed places
- Protecting Green Belt land
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

### **3.6 Assessment**

#### 3.6.1 The main issues pertinent in the assessment of the proposal are;

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Highways and PROW;
- Ecology; and
- Amenity

#### 3.7 Principle of Development:

3.7.1 The development site, and the surrounding land, lies within the Green Belt as designated under the current Development Plan. Unitary Development Plan Policy GB2 sets out a presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include situations the provision of essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes.

#### 3.8 Design:

3.8.1 UDP Policy GB2 requires new development proposals to not damage the visual amenities of the Green Belt by virtue of its siting, materials or design.

3.8.2 Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies in relation to the Green Belt. Facilities for outdoor sport are not inappropriate within the Green Belt as long as they preserve the openness of the Green Belt (paragraph 145 refers).

3.8.3 The Government's policies in relation to design are set out under Section 12 of the Framework. Paragraph 124 of the Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit (Paragraph 127 of the Framework refers).

3.8.4 Paragraph 130 of the Framework states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

3.8.5 The application proposes the installation of an additional 3G sports pitch with floodlights. According to the submitted Planning Statement, this would involve excavation works and it would involve the removal of trees and shrubberies. A dedicated footpath would run from the car park in the north and would be screened by a fence. Floodlights would also be

erected around the pitch.

3.8.6 It is considered that in this particular case, having regard to existing facilities and the surroundings of the site, that proposed sports facilities including ancillary parking, lighting and fencing would be appropriate within this Green Belt setting.

3.9 Highways:

3.9.1 The requirements for off-street vehicle parking are set out as maximums under UDP Policy TR9 and the accompanying Supplementary Planning Document on Parking Standards.

3.9.2 Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Development should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movement, address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility, create safe, secure and attractive places whilst minimising the scope for conflict between different users and allowing for the efficient delivery of goods and emergency access.

3.9.3 In considering these proposals, the Council's Highways engineers have some concerns over vehicles being parked off-site away from the training ground. The engineers have advised that a condition should be imposed which ensures the overspill car parking area is resurfaced and marked out prior to the first use of the sports pitch. In addition, as part of the Council's Grant Funding towards 50% of the costs of the 3G pitch, this grant will also pay for and secure highways improvements on Leasowe Road. These improvements would include the following;

- A residents parking scheme installed to Heyes Drive & parts of Leasowe Road – including gateway signage at the Heyes Drive junction. To deter development associated vehicles from impacting on the neighbouring residents parking requirements.
- Double yellow lines installed on Leasowe Road at the sports pitch entrance to maintain visibility for exiting vehicles.
- Two advance direction signs, one installed at the Campus and one for the training pitches, as drivers are mistakenly turning into the Solar Campus entrance instead of the entrance to the sports pitches, consequently if the Campus gates are locked vehicles then have to reverse out onto Leasowe Road causing a road safety hazard.
- Minor improvements to the gap in the central reserve opposite Heyes Drive to help enforce the current no U-turn ban, including an additional thermoplastic carriageway road marking.

3.10 Ecology:

3.10.1 The development site abuts a site of biological importance. The protection of these sites is enshrined in UDP Policies NC6 and NC7. UDP Policy NC7 states that development which would have an adverse impact on wildlife species protected by law will not be permitted unless the protection of said species can be secured.

3.10.2 The Local Planning Authority rely on Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) and Wirral Wildlife to provide advice and guidance on ecological matters. MEAS advise that the lighting scheme for the site is to be designed as to not spill into surrounding habitats and a condition has been imposed. Any tree or shrub clearance is to occur either outside of the bird breeding season or is to be checked by an ecologist prior to clearance. Compensatory bird boxes are to be provided which can be secured via condition.

3.10.3 The site is within Flood Zone's 2 & 3. Both the Environment Agency has considered the supporting Flood Risk Assessment and raised no objection to the proposal.

- 3.11 Amenity:
- 3.11.1 Paragraph 127 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should create places that provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 3.11.2 There are existing playing pitches between the development site and the nearest residences. It is not anticipated that this proposal would result in any significant materially adverse impacts to the amenity of these residences.
- 3.12 Other:
- 3.12.1 Over the course of this application, 7 letters of representation comprising of 2 comments against and 5 objections have been received. A qualifying petition signed by 36 signatures has been received against the proposal. The objections can be summarised as follows:
- a) Impact on amenity
  - b) Parking & Traffic

Planning approval APP/14/00310 was for the provision of four football pitches within the site and was not subject to an hours condition restricting the use of the site. On that basis, it is not considered reasonable to impose such a condition for a single pitch which is a reasonable distance away from the nearest residence.

The Highways Engineer has raised no objection subject to the overspill parking area being laid out and the highway improvements to the road network which will be funded and undertaken by the Council as part of the Council's Grant Fund towards this scheme.

#### **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 policy advice. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following: -

The proposal would fall within the exceptions for development within the Green Belt as prescribed by UDP Policy GB2 and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Subject to conditions the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon protected species and the proposal has raised no objection from the Environment Agency and is considered to be in accordance with UDP Policies NC6, NC7, WA1 and WA2. Subject to a financial contribution secured by way of a s106 for improvements to the road network, the Engineer has raised no objection. The proposal is recommended for approval accordingly.

**Recommended Decision:**            **Approve**

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

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans received by the local planning authority on 30 December 2019 and listed as follows: 98\_2019-01 Rev. B, 98\_2019-02 Rev. A, 98\_2019-03 Rev. A

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

3. No tree felling, scrub clearance, hedgerow removal, vegetation management is to take place during the period 1 March to 31 August inclusive. If it is necessary to undertake works during the bird breeding season then all buildings, trees, scrub, hedgerows and vegetation are to be checked first by an appropriately experienced ecologist to ensure no breeding birds are present. If present, details of how they will be protected are required to be submitted for approval and agreed in writing.

**Reason:** In accordance with Policy NC7 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan

4. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until details of bird boxes to include number, type and location on an appropriately scaled plan as well as timing of installation, has been provided for approval and implemented in accordance with those details.

**Reason:** In the interest of species protection having regards to policy NC7 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan

5. Prior to first use, details of the floodlighting shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt, the submitted details shall include (but not be limited to) beam orientation, light spill, lux levels and proposed hours of illumination. Regard should be had to Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and Artificial Lighting of the Institute of Lighting Professionals to ensure that the lighting for the proposed development is considered and will not adversely affect the functionality of the ecological receptors. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and be maintained as such thereafter.

**Reason:** In order to protect amenity whilst also protecting and enhancing biodiversity on the site in accordance with the aim of local planning policy

6. Prior to first use, the parking area as shown on 98\_2019-01 Rev. A shall be surfaced and laid out for vehicles to park, turn and enter and exit the site in a forward gear in accordance with details that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The area shall thereafter be kept available at all times for the parking of vehicles.

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

7. Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to first use, details of all fences and other means of enclosure shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The fencing shall only be installed in accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained as such thereafter.

**Reason:** In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with UDP Policy GB2

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

1. The applicant, their advisers and contractors should be made aware that if any European protected species are found, then as a legal requirement, work must cease, and advice must be sought from a licensed specialist.

**Last Comments By:** 10/03/2020  
**Expiry Date:** 06/04/2020