



Swanmore College of Technology New Road, Swanmore

Planning Statement

October 2012

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Hampshire County Council and is submitted in support of a proposal for an all-weather synthetic-turf pitch (STP), with floodlighting and associated works, and a full-size junior grass rugby pitch on land adjacent to the Swanmore College of Technology ('the College'), New Road, Swanmore.

1.2 The primary objective of the proposal is to provide enhanced sports and recreation facilities for Swanmore College although, by local agreement with and management by the College, it is intended that the STP will be made available for use by the wider community out of school hours.

1.3 The proposal is on land currently used for grazing, situated to the north of the College buildings, which is owned by a third party and on which Linden Homes have an option. This application is being submitted concurrently with a separate planning application, prepared by Linden Homes, for the residential development of part of the existing College playing fields, situated to the north-east of the College buildings.

1.4 This application and that prepared by Linden Homes result from the identification of an opportunity to 'swap' part of the College's existing playing fields for the grazing land, which is of a similar size, in order to:

- develop the existing playing field, which lies within Swanmore's settlement boundary, for housing and
- replace the existing playing field by providing a grass rugby pitch and floodlit STP on the existing paddock, which lies within a Local Gap.

1.5 The proceeds of sale from this proposed land 'swap' will provide the College with the necessary funding to implement the works proposed within this application, together with funding for further educational improvements to the College.

1.6 Should planning consent be granted for both applications, the residential development will relieve pressure on Winchester City Council's housing need, and this proposal will provide a modern, flexible facility for the College and community to enjoy. However, it should be noted that, if either the application for the floodlit STP and grass rugby pitch or the separate application for housing is refused, neither scheme will go ahead. Both applications are thus dependant on one another's success.

1.7 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assess the proposals for the STP and rugby pitch against the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations that are relevant in determining such a planning application. In particular, proposals for the site have been guided by relevant national planning guidance, the Winchester District Local Plan Review (2006) and the pre-submission Winchester District Local Plan, Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (January 2012).

1.8 This statement should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement (DAS) submitted with the application.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The County Council has a general consent to effect a land 'swap' of the College's playing field under paragraph 2 of the Schedule to The School Playing Fields General Disposal and Change of Use Consent (No. 3) 2004. On this basis, prior consent of the Secretary of State under S77 of the School Standards a Framework Act 1998 is not required.

2.2 However, this proposal is entirely reliant on the proceeds of sale from the land 'swap' associated with the proposal from Linden Homes for residential development. The County Council will not release the College's existing playing field for residential development without the ability to effect the replacement recreational provision which enhances both the quantity and quality of the College's sporting facilities. Therefore, the two separate proposals are entirely interdependent on one another.

2.3 Given the impermeable clay soils in the area, replacement grass pitches alone would not represent an enhancement, nor be flexible enough to satisfy possible sporting needs of the College in the future. Therefore, an STP is the preferred format for the College and satisfies Sport England's requirement for replacement playing pitches to offer enhanced provision and management.

2.4 The College has been running a successful community-lettings programme for more than six years, which includes the use of the existing floodlit Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) to the south of the College buildings. However, whilst the MUGA is well used by the local community, its limited size restricts the range of sporting activities that can be undertaken and it suffers with poor surface water drainage during winter months. In addition, whilst there are a number of full-size grass pitches elsewhere in the local neighbourhood, it is understood that these suffer with over-use and water-logging, and can be largely unusable during the winter months

2.5 As a consequence, during the period that it has been operating its programme for the community use of its facilities, the College has continuously received enquiries and feedback expressing the need for a full-size artificial pitch. The anecdotal evidence provided by the College's Director of Community, Site & Facilities is supported by the LPA's Open Space Strategy (2011), which identifies a current deficiency of 0.3 hectare (ha) of sports land within Swanmore.

2.6 In the plan period to 2031, the draft Local Plan Core Strategy proposes an additional 150-250 new homes in Swanmore and this planned growth of the resident population could see the potential deficiency of sports land within Swanmore rise to 1.26ha by 2031. The proposed STP will provide 0.6ha of sports land which, if also available for community use out of school hours, could therefore help to address the existing deficiency of sports land within Swanmore. However, in order to allow the local community to take full advantage of the STP outside of the school day during winter afternoons and evenings the STP would need to be floodlit.

2.7 In turn, floodlighting will not only allow community use but also help fund the on-going maintenance of the STP, through letting income, and make the overall staffing costs of the College's community-lettings programme more viable.

2.8 This proposal will therefore provide a significant enhancement to the overall quality of sports provision for the College, and allow this to be made available for community use within Swanmore, addressing the issues of over-use and poor drainage associated with equivalent grass pitch provision.

3 THE APPLICATION SITE

3.1 The application site falls entirely within the administrative boundary of Winchester City Council, and lies to the south-west of Swanmore. Its location is outlined in red in Figure 1

3.2 The site covers an area of approximately 2.8ha and is managed grassland, currently in use as paddocks. To the north-east it abuts further paddocks and open land. To the north-west the site is bounded by Lower Chase Road. To the south-west and south-east, the site borders the existing grounds of the College, with the College buildings immediately to the south of the site.

3.3 The site falls from east to west but is generally level and, other than its northern boundary, its existing perimeter is delineated with tree and hedge planting of varying quality and quantity. There are no other significant landscape features within the site.

3.4 The existing access to the site for both vehicles and pedestrians is gained through field gates off Lower Chase Road. Other than along Lower Chase Road, there are no public rights of way around or across the site.

3.5 Figure 1 also shows the existing extent of the Swanmore College grounds outlined in blue. The area also outlined in blue to the north-east of the College buildings is the existing playing field that is to be 'swapped' for the application site.

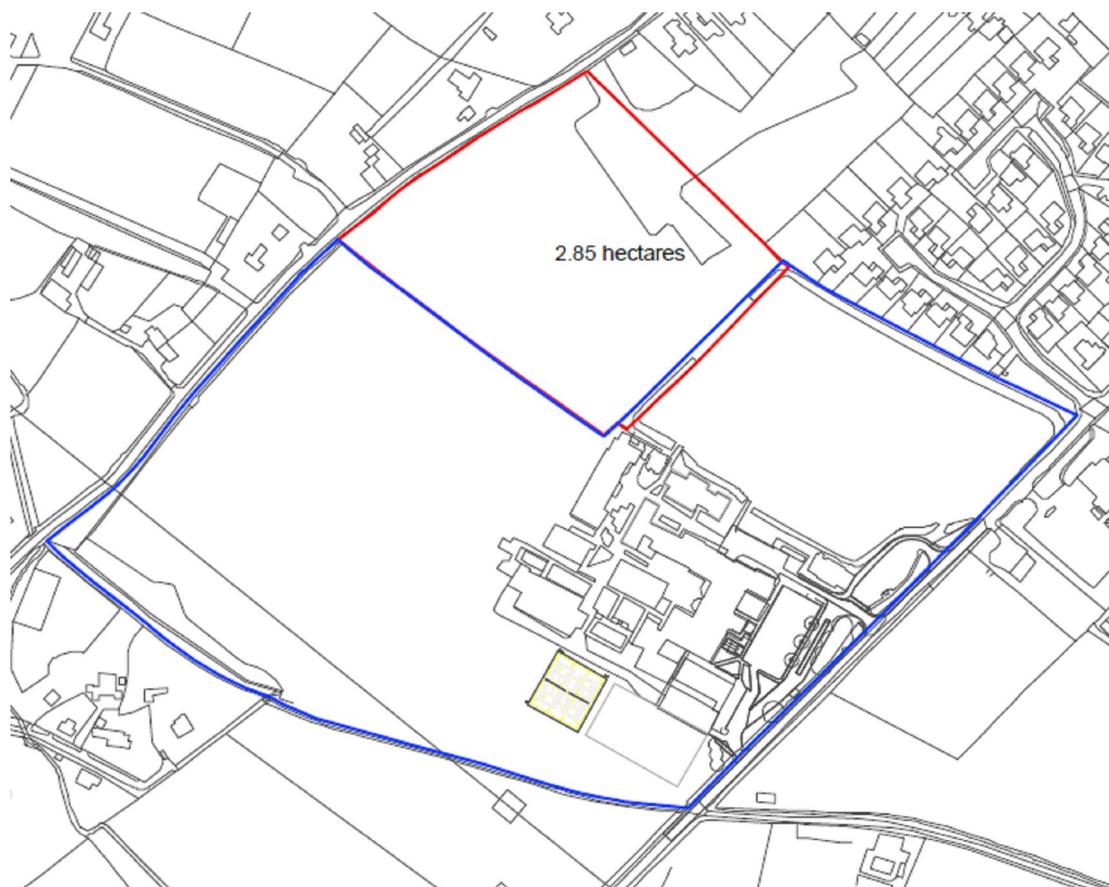


Figure 1 Application site and grounds of Swanmore College

4 THE SCHEME PROPOSAL

4.1 The description of the proposal is for a “*Full application for the development of an All Weather Synthetic Turf Pitch with Floodlighting and Associated Works, including a full-size grass rugby pitch*”.

The principal components of the proposal are described below.

4.2 **STP:** The natural ground slope is to be remodelled so that the finished level of the pitch in the north-east corner, nearest to the housing on Crofton Way, will be approximately 1.5m lower than the existing ground levels.

The all-weather pitch is to be surfaced with a synthetic (3rd Generation 60mm thick pile) turf carpet, in-filled with sand and rubber crumb and incorporating a 15mm shock absorbing layer applied onto an open textured macadam base.

The pitch is to be full size, 100 x 65m, plus 3.0m run off margins to the back of the goals and to the sides. Goal recesses are to be incorporate at each end with additional goal recesses for cross court play.

The perimeter of the pitch is to be enclosed with a new 4.5 high fence, comprising rigid twin-wire panel fencing, polyester powder-coated moss green (RAL6005) to minimise its visual impact within the landscape. Access gates, 3.0m wide, with removable lintels are to be provided for maintenance and emergency access. Elsewhere, 1.2m wide single gates are to be incorporated for ball retrieval.

4.3 **Floodlighting:** The proposed floodlighting proposals have been developed by specialist suppliers to conform with the minimum requirements of Sport England for educational use and the recommendations of the Football Association and with reference to The Institution of Lighting Engineers: Guidance Notes for The Reduction of Light Pollution, 2000.

The proposed lighting mast height is 15m, calculated using the Chartered Institute of Building Surveyor Services Engineers' guide (LG4 Sports Lighting). This will allow the floodlights to be mounted horizontally to minimise light overspill but provide good lighting uniformity on the playing surface. If the mast height was lower than 15m the floodlights would need to be tilted above the horizontal, thus increasing light overspill and direct glare for neighbouring properties. The lighting masts will be a slim-line profile to minimise their visual impact during daylight hours.

4.4 **Rugby Pitch:** The grass rugby pitch is to be laid to a uniform 1:100 fall across the diagonal, from east to west. Owing to the poor quality and nature of the existing ground, the surface of the pitch is to be made up of imported topsoil, ameliorated with sand. In addition, a full pitch drainage scheme, incorporating pipe drains with sand grooves is to be installed in accordance with Sport England's Design Guidance Note for Natural Turf for Sport (Type 4).

4.5 **Access:** The established access to the College from New Road will be unaffected by this proposal, allowing for safe access and egress to the site under the control of the College. Access to the STP and rugby pitch for grounds maintenance, and for players, will be via a new 2.5m wide macadam path leading from the College's existing Sports Hall.

The existing gated access from Lower Chase Road is to be retained but controlled to allow only emergency access into the College grounds. It is also proposed that this access is used, and upgraded as necessary, to allow access to the site compound during construction. Owing to the nature of the ground (overlying clay), the duration of the construction work for the pitch is expected to

be 26 weeks (subject to weather and unforeseen circumstances), with site huts and materials located close to the proposed STP for security and to minimise disruption to the school.

4.6 **Landscaping:** No trees will be affected or removed as part of the pitch development and the existing boundary planting will be retained and strengthened, in accordance with the landscaping details submitted with this proposal, to enhance both visual enclosure and biodiversity of the site. A single, low quality tree and group of congested planting immediately adjacent to the College buildings in the southern corner of the site are to be removed to provide an access path (2.5m wide) for players and maintenance from the existing College.

The northern boundary of the site is to be defined by a low maintenance boundary fence, to provide necessary site security for the College, with indigenous hedge planting that will supplement reflect the rural character and enhance potential biodiversity. There are no other proposed alterations to the existing boundaries around the school.

A 'swale' (or temporary pond) is to be provided close to the western corner of the site for surface water drainage and to enhance biodiversity within the site.

4.7 Further details on the above and other matters are contained in the submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS).

5 POLICY REVIEW

5.1 This section provides an overview of relevant planning guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local planning policy set out in the Winchester District Local Plan Review 2006 (Local Plan) and the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 - Joint Core Strategy (Core Strategy), which covers the plan period to 2031 and has recently been submitted to the Government for independent inspection.

5.2 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and constitutes guidance for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) which must be taken into account as a material consideration in planning decisions. Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principles of Development

5.3 The NPPF defines that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Para 14 of the NPPF highlights that this means granting permission where the Development Plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework.

5.4 Paras 186-187 of the NPPF state that LPAs should approach decision-taking in a positive way and look for solutions rather than problems, with decision-takers at every level encouraged to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

5.5 The NPPF recognises that to deliver the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services that the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space and community facilities, such as local sports venues. Para 72 highlights the great importance the Government attaches to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities and that, in achieving this, LPAs should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools. LPAs are encouraged, therefore, to work with the promoters of schools to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

5.6 In the context of this proposal, Core Strategy Policy MRTA 2 supports the evolution and the improvement of existing facilities in Swanmore, and states that essential uses may be relocated if they can be reprovided in a suitable and accessible location and if proposals for the re-use of vacated land are also acceptable. Subject to that policy, Core Strategy Policy CP6 also supports proposals for the development of new facilities and services, which include educational establishments and recreational facilities.

Open Space and Recreation

5.7 Para 73 of the NPPF identifies access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation as being key contributors to the health and well-being of communities. It goes on to state that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments

should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.

5.8 Winchester City Council has undertaken an *Open Space Strategy* (2011) which identifies a current deficiency of 1ha of open space within Swanmore, of which 0.3ha is a specific deficit in relation to sports land. Taking into account the proposed housing and population growth set out in the draft Winchester Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (Policy MTRA 2), the potential deficiency for sports land within Swanmore could rise to 1.26ha by 2031, in accordance with the standards set out in Local Plan Policy RT.4.

5.9 This proposal would provide 0.6ha of sports land in the form of a floodlit STP, and is therefore in accordance with draft Core Strategy Policy CP7, which states that the LPA will seek improvements in built recreation facilities to achieve the space levels set out in its open space strategy. The Policy states that this will be achieved by new and improved provision and by improving access for all to existing facilities and education provision. In order to comply with the latter, the proposal necessitates the use of floodlighting of the proposed STP in order to enable community use during the evenings.

5.10 This application does not involve the loss of existing open space, sports or recreational land. However, this proposal is linked, by virtue of a land 'swap', to a separate application by Linden Homes to redevelop an area of the College's existing playing fields, within the settlement boundary, for residential use. Whilst it is for the Linden Homes application to address the issue of a loss of playing fields, that proposal meets with the objectives of Para 74 of the NPPF and Local Plan Policy RT2 which state that playing fields should not be built on unless (as in this instance) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.

5.11 On this matter, it should be noted that Sport England were consulted about the overall proposals and responded in April 2012 that, provided that the replacement pitches are of an equivalent or better quantity and quality, subject to similar or better management arrangements, and that the College can demonstrate the need for a 3G pitch, the proposal may meet Sport England's policy criteria (E4 and E5) for allowing an exceptional loss of sports pitches.

Design and Layout

5.12 Local Plan Policy DP.3 states that development will be permitted if it makes efficient and effective use of land. This application proposes to make an efficient use of land by siting the floodlit STP within close proximity to the College buildings and adjacent to the Swanmore settlement policy boundary, with the grass rugby pitch to the north-west of the STP as a means of providing a gradual transition from the built development of Swanmore and the College to the open countryside (see the accompanying Design and Access Statement for site option testing).

5.13 An acoustic survey was commissioned in order to inform the design and layout of the proposals for the STP and rugby pitch so as to minimise potential noise disturbance from sporting activities. The report of the acoustic survey is submitted separately with the application.

Local Gap and Countryside

5.14 The site is situated within the designated Local Gap between Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore, where Local Plan Policies CE.2 and CE.3, and Core Strategy Policy CP18 apply, and is within the open countryside and subject to Local Plan Policy CE4. In addition the Local Plan (para 4.93) notes that the countryside is an important recreation resource and Policy CE.28 permits recreation development where (*inter alia*) it maintains and safeguards the open and undeveloped nature of the countryside, and gaps between settlements, and does not require buildings or structures harmful to the rural character.

5.15 Local Plan Policies CE.2 and CE.3 and Core Strategy Policy CP18 allow development within the Local Gap where it does not physically or visually diminish the Gap or undermine its function. Paragraph 7.47 of the Core Strategy states that "*Gaps provide a key opportunity to provide green infrastructure around the District, in addition to shaping and maintaining the settlement pattern*"

5.16 The proposed development maintains the open nature of the Local Gap by siting the proposed STP as close as possible to the College buildings and the urban edge of Swanmore, and is therefore not considered to physically diminish the function or appearance of the Local Gap.

5.17 The proposal would entail the erection of floodlighting and perimeter fencing to enable the effective use of the STP by both the College and the local community. However, the proposed siting of the STP means that it would be well screened from New Road as views would be obscured by the existing roadside planting, the College buildings, and the proposed residential development. From Lower Chase Road, the only publicly accessible vantage point, the structures associated with the proposed STP would be beyond the grass rugby pitch and would be seen in the context of the existing group of College buildings, the proposed residential development, and the adjacent existing residential properties along Crofton Way.

5.18 In accordance with Local Plan Policy CE.3, the proposal does not include substantial structures nor extensive hard surfacing; the proposed STP would have a permeable, artificial-grass surface which, together with the grass rugby pitch, would retain an 'open land' character to the site. It should also be noted that the scale of the proposed structures will not be as visually intrusive as the existing national grid pylons which are located to the south-west of the College site, and which are also located within the Local Gap. Furthermore, the proposal site is well-screened by existing boundary landscaping, which will be further strengthened as part of this proposal along the Lower Chase Road, and will accord with the requirements of Local Plan Policy CE.3 to retain and incorporate existing hedgerows and trees. .

5.19 Local Plan Policy CE.4 permits the development of essential facilities and services to serve the local community, including educational facilities, provided that (*inter alia*) a particular site in the countryside is essential for operation reasons and that there are no suitable alternative sites for the proposed development within the defined built up area.

5.20 The College currently controls open land within its campus that is within the defined settlement boundary, but that land is the subject of the proposed land 'swap' and a separate proposal by Linden Homes for residential development. The proceeds of sale from this land 'swap' are critical to funding the delivery of the floodlit STP and full-size grass rugby pitch for the College. In the absence of this funding, there is no means of delivering the enhanced sports and recreational facilities for the College.

5.21 With the exception of the land identified for the land 'swap', all the College's remaining playing fields, including the existing floodlit MUGA, are located within the Local Gap and the countryside. Therefore, in the context of this proposal there are no alternative locations for the siting of the proposed STP and full size rugby pitch within the settlement boundary. Therefore the proposal is considered to fully meet the criteria set out in local planning policies governing development within the countryside and Local Gap.

Landscape features

5.22 Local Plan Policy CE.5 requires development to respect the landscape character of the local area. The site is located within the Shedfield Heathlands Landscape Character Area, defined as "*pasture and woodland heath associated*", and where views are described as "*short, due to the undulating topography, frequent buildings, trees and often-overgrown hedgerows*" (Landscape Character Assessment, SPG, 2004, WCC).

5.23 There are no Tree Preservation Orders within the site. An initial visual inspection of the trees surrounding the site and a detailed topographic survey were carried to accurately plot levels around the site. Following this a Tree Survey, carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in BS 5837:2012 was prepared. The footprints of the proposed pitches have been located to ensure that, together with associated earth grading works, there would be no impact on existing trees.

5.24 As an additional precaution, and to ensure earthworks do not encroach up to the boundaries, Heras panel fencing, reinforced with scaffold poles, in accordance with '*BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*' is to be erected around the perimeter of the site.

5.25 With the exception of a single, low-quality tree and group of congested planting immediately adjacent to the College buildings in the southern corner of the site, which are to be removed to provide pedestrian access from the College, no other landscaping is to be removed as part of this application.

5.26 Given the above, the use of existing paddocks for a grass rugby and synthetic turf pitches will not cause harm to the key landscape characteristics of the area and the proposal is considered to comply with the Local Plan Policy CE5.

Biodiversity

5.27 Local Plan Policies CE.9 and CE.10 seek to minimise adverse impacts of development on interests of nature conservation and Policy CE.11 encourages opportunities to improve habitats and features of nature conservation interest. Emerging Core Strategy Policy CP16 seeks similar objectives.

5.28 There are no designated sites of importance to nature conservation (SINCs) within or immediately adjacent to the application site. The nearest SINCs are to south and east of the College grounds and further north beyond the houses in Broad Lane.

5.29 Following a Phase I Habitat Survey undertaken in September 2011 on both the existing school playing field and the horse paddock, for and on behalf of Linden Homes, Hampshire Ecological Services Ltd prepared an Ecological Assessment Report in December 2011. This report concluded that habitats and species observed on the site are generally of low nature conservation value from a botanical perspective, the exceptions being the trees within woodland strips, which are to be retained

as part of the proposals. In accordance with the recommendations in the report, a Phase 2 Habitat Survey has been undertaken into potential reptile and bat habitats on the application site and both survey reports are submitted separately with this application.

5.30 The proposals allow for enhanced biodiversity, through additional boundary tree and hedge planting, and offer the potential to improve habitat, through the proposed “swale” to the west of the site, and are thus considered to conform to Local Plan Policies.

Flood Risk

5.31 The NPPF and Core Strategy Policy CP17 seek to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas at highest risk.

5.32 The application site constitutes an area with the lowest risk from flooding (Flood Zone 1) according to Environment Agency mapping and Winchester City’s published Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2007) and flood risk and drainage has been considered as part of the site options exercise (see DAS). A Flood Risk Assessment report is submitted separately with the application.

Movement, Access and Parking

5.33 The proposed STP and rugby pitch will be part of the education campus, replacing an existing grass playing field, and will have no additional impact in terms of operational traffic and parking for the College than at present. The use of the STP by external groups will be managed by the College and the existing College car parks will be available out-of-hours for users of the STP. The proposals therefore satisfy Local Plan Policy T.1 in so far as this is applicable.

5.34 Details regarding temporary access arrangements during the construction of the STP and rugby pitch are provided in the DAS. It is proposed that traffic generated during the construction of the STP and rugby pitch will use Lower Chase Road, using the existing gated access into the site. After construction, the gateway will be locked and retained solely for emergency access.

5.35 A Transport Statement, submitted separately with this application, considers the impact of construction traffic and the likely impact of out-of hours traffic movements at the College associated with the community use of the STP. The Statement concludes that the proposals will result in a weekly average of 13 construction vehicles movements over a six month period and that the existing car parks within Swanmore College are able to accommodate the expected parking demand without recourse to the public highway.

5.36 Overall, the replacement sports pitches for the College will be equally if not more easily accessible for users than the existing playing field, following the provision of a level and lit path, to be constructed in accordance with national guidance on disabled access, to the STP. The proposals thus satisfy Local Plan Policy T.2 where this is applicable.

Loss of agricultural land

5.37 Local Plan Policy CE.12 on the protection of good quality agricultural land expired in July 2007 and there is no corresponding policy in the draft Core Strategy. The NPPF states that LPAs should take into account the best and most versatile agricultural land.

5.38 National guidance [Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988] classifies the quality of agricultural land from 1 (excellent) to 5 (very poor). The application site is classified as Grade 4 (poor quality) and, therefore, the proposal does not conflict with current Government policy guidance.

Other material considerations

5.39 Under the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HASAWA), the employer of a school must take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, made under the HASAWA, require employers to set out in more detail what action to take for areas of risk and keep a record of the findings. Hampshire County Council delegates this task to the headteacher in schools, although it retains overall responsibility as the employer.

5.40 Headteachers must ensure that effective security arrangements are in place through risk assessment. This is often achieved through a combination of robust safe management procedures, effective supervision and appropriate fencing/gating (as determined) commensurate with the identified risks. Headteachers must take into account the school's location, grounds layout, ages of children, supervision capability, and size of school when looking at what would be effective means of control.

5.41 The areas requiring due consideration with regards to this proposal would be:

- The personal safety of staff, children and visitors to school premises
- Children able to wander off premises
- Unauthorised entry to the school site
- Intrusion to school premises (both during and after school hours)

5.42 The proposal has considered each of the issues and fully addressed them in arriving at the final design for the STP and grass pitch, including through siting of fencing, boundary planting and acoustic measures.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 The proposal for the development of the application site is in accordance with planning policy at the national and local level. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The supporting documents submitted as part of the application provide a robust evidence base to demonstrate that there are no overriding disbenefits associated with the scheme proposals. Where any impacts have been identified, suitable mitigation measures have been proposed. The proposals are compliant with planning policy and will deliver a broad range of educational and community benefits in the form of improvements to sports facilities at Swanmore College.

6.3 In line with government guidance, the proposal will deliver a high quality sports and recreation facilities, that will also be available to the public, within an accessible location and therefore meets the objectives of sustainable development.