

OFFICER REPORT FOR DECISION UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

APPLICATION NO: P0361.24

WARD: Rush Grn & Crowlands **Date Received:** 12th March 2024

ADDRESS: Rush Green Training Ground, Rush Green Road
Romford

PROPOSAL: Retention of Aganto media building

DRAWING NO(S): PL01 Rev A
IMQUO 01 Rev A
PL00 Rev A

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that **planning permission be GRANTED** subject to the condition(s) given at the end of the report

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is an area of hardstanding located at the old Ford Motor Works Sports Stadium north of Rush Green Road. To the immediate north of the site is a football ground, to the south is a car park which serves the football ground and beyond the car park is Rush Green Road; to the east across an area of grassland at a distance in excess of 70 metres are the rear gardens of houses on Bellhouse Road and to the west is open grassland. The site is used by West Ham United as their training ground.

The site is host to a number of temporary buildings used in connection with the club, which have been permitted in lieu of a more permanent redevelopment of the site. To that end, proposals for redevelopment of the site have been submitted as recently as 2024.

The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the retention of a single storey structure "Aganto" building. Permission had previously been granted for this structure in 2021 for a fixed period of three years (due to expire in October 2024) as it was a requirement of the Club's qualification to European competition. Permission is sought for its retention for a further fixed period of three years whilst the Club undertakes pre-application processes with the Council over more comprehensive and permanent redevelopment of the site.

RELEVANT HISTORY

P0080.24	Variation of Condition No. 2 of Planning Permission ref P1478.23 dated 30/11/2023 to substitute 4 of the approved drawings with revised versions (Erection of a new training building) Apprv with cons 10-04-2024
P1733.23	Proposed extension to existing club building to provide gym Apprv with cons 02-02-2024
P1478.23	Erection of new training building Apprv with cons 30-11-2023
P0147.23	Retention of a temporary single storey Portakabin complex comprising 7no buildings. All buildings hired for a period of 104 weeks. Apprv with cons 28-04-2023
P1504.21	Retention of temporary gymnasium building Apprv with cons 15-10-2021
P1506.21	Erection of new training building to be used by West Ham United Football Club, including West Ham Ladies Football Team. Apprv with cons 13-10-2021

CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS

A site notice was displayed adjacent to the site and the application was advertised in the local press. In addition, neighbouring occupiers were consulted. No letters of representation have been received.

No objections have previously been made by other consultees and given the nature of the development it is not envisaged that its retention raises any material considerations not previously considered.

RELEVANT POLICIES

Havering Local Plan 2016-2031 - Policies 23, 24, 26, 27, 34.
London Plan - Policies D1, S5, G2, T5, T6
NPPF

MAYORAL CIL IMPLICATIONS

The proposals are not liable for a Mayoral CIL contribution.

STAFF COMMENTS

In the intervening period from the earlier temporary consent the Council has adopted the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031. This document does not have any specific Green Belt Policy and the Council

is therefore reliant on the NPPF and London Plan. Nevertheless the even with the adoption of the HLP the policy landscape has not changed substantially with regards to the Green Belt considerations.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The applicant (West Ham United Football Club) took over the former Ford United Football Club ground in 2009 to use it for youth and reserve team training and games. The former use of the site by Ford United Football Club came under Class D2 of the Use Classes Order; the use of the site by West Ham United also falls under the same use class therefore no planning permission is required for a change of use.

The application site is designated as being within the Metropolitan Green Belt where Government guidance and local planning policy encourages specified uses which have a positive role in fulfilling Green Belt objectives. The occupation of the site by West Ham United ensures that the site continues to be used to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation in a manner that supports Green Belt objectives. This is consistent also with Policy 18 of the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031 which supports development that improves the quality of and access to, existing open space, sports and recreation facilities.

The above is consistent with earlier decision making and the Council's views of the site more broadly.

GREEN BELT IMPLICATIONS

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) attaches great weight to Green Belts in preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. In addition the NPPF sets out five purposes of the Green Belt, which includes to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas and to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. As with previous Green Belt policy, the NPPF advises that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt.

The NPPF sets out forms of development that are deemed to be appropriate within the Green Belt and states that construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development. A given exception to this is the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation as long as it would preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The use of the overall site as a sports ground plays a positive role in fulfilling Green Belt objectives and the building to be retained for a further temporary period plays a part in meeting UEFA requirements, as is evidenced by the applicant.

The unit would therefore be used in a capacity that would improve/supplement the existing facilities and use of the wider site which would comply with the objectives of the Framework (Para 154). There is a general acceptance that where development complies with the objectives of the Green Belt and openness is not specifically cited as a consideration within the relevant exception that openness, or rather any impact upon it, is regarded as acceptable. That said, the relevant exception in the NPPF is reliant on development not harming the openness of the Green Belt or conflicting with any of the purposes of including land within it. The area of hardstanding where the building is sited has been used by the club for staff/player parking.

The presence of the building on an existing area of hard-standing is such that it would not encroach into any undeveloped or open areas of the site and would be read against the backdrop of the existing demountable units to the east and the main building and stands to the north. As such it is not regarded as having any material impact on openness. Notwithstanding the above the proposals are sought for a fixed period only and therefore it is accepted that were any material harm identified it would not be material in so far as that the building is not envisaged to be a long term addition to the site.

In the absence of any undue impact to the openness of the Green Belt and the temporary nature of the consent sought, no conflict with relevant policy has been identified. In reaching this view, whilst not identifying any conflict with the objectives of the Green Belt officers recognise the need for the facilities and the circumstances of the site. In reaching this view officers accept that proposals would maintain the function of fulfilling Green Belt objectives which would outweigh any harm whilst more permanent redevelopment of the site is explored and then implemented.

DESIGN/IMPACT ON STREET/GARDEN SCENE

The Council considered the design impacts previously and held no objection. There is no evidence before officers that there are grounds to depart from this view. It is accepted, through the temporary nature of the permission sought, that this would be a transient feature in the environment and one that is not envisaged to be maintained long-term or on a permanent basis. Therefore its visual impacts are regarded as acceptable. The appearance is in keeping with other buildings on the site. Its location means that it is read against the backdrop of the main building and there are no views from the public realm.

IMPACT ON AMENITY

The application site is largely removed from adjoining residential properties with Crowlands Heath Golf Course to the north and Wood Lane Sports Centre to the west. To the south the site fronts onto Rush Green Road with housing beyond. To the east the site is bounded by a Public Right of Way with the residential dwellings of those properties fronting onto Bellhouse Road and Meadow Road beyond.

The position of the building is on an area of hard-standing close to the main building. Consequently it is well removed from any sensitive receptors. Furthermore the activity associated would not be distinguishable from the wider use of the site in the opinion of officers, this is consistent with earlier decision making and the views of the Council's EHOs who have not raised an objection previously.

Whilst there is a potential for noise disturbance associated with the use of the land as a sports ground, the use of the site by West Ham United does not in itself require planning permission. Given the longstanding use of the site, the position of the unit and its use in association with the club it is unlikely that any amenity issues would arise that would be capable of substantiating a refusal.

HIGHWAY/PARKING

The current proposals are to supplement existing facilities and therefore the impacts of the development in highways/parking terms are regarded as negligible. The site is well served by a existing areas of parking with in excess of 160 spaces. Whilst the proposals have resulted in the loss of five parking spaces in the car park, the building has been in situ since prior to permission being given previously and there is no evidence that this has translated to any material harm to the highway, or that capacity is not met by the retained areas of parking. As such it is not considered that there are any grounds with which to withhold permission. This is consistent with earlier decision making where the Highway Authority had not expressed any objection.

KEY ISSUES/CONCLUSIONS

In this instance it is considered that a further temporary consent for a further three year period is appropriate and consistent with earlier decision making and that this would enable the Club to continue competing, whilst other more permanent redevelopment proposals are explored.

Having regard to the above and in doing so all relevant planning policy and material considerations, APPROVAL is recommended accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that **planning permission be GRANTED** subject to the following condition(s)

1 SC16 (Temporary permission) INSERT DATE

This permission shall be for a limited period only expiring on 7 May 2027 on or before which date the use hereby permitted shall be discontinued, the buildings and works carried out under this permission shall be removed and the site reinstated to its former condition to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain control.

2 SC32 (Accordance with plans)

The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans (as set out on page one of this decision notice).

Reason:-

For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out as approved.

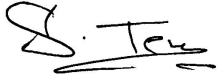
INFORMATIVES

1 Approval - No negotiation required

Statement Required by Article 35(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) Order 2015: No significant problems were identified during the consideration of

the application, and therefore it has been determined in accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Authorising Officer:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Terry', with a horizontal line underneath.

Suzanne Terry

7th May 2024