
Case Number	20/00159/FUL (Formerly PP-08430633)
Application Type	Full Planning Application
Proposal	Erection of ball stop netting to Northern and Southern boundaries of cricket ground (maximum height of 15metres)
Location	Football Pitch Hallam Sports Club Sandygate Road Sheffield S10 5SE
Date Received	16/01/2020
Team	West and North
Applicant/Agent	Mark Beckles Willson
Recommendation	Grant Conditionally

Time limit for Commencement of Development

1. The development shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Approved/Refused Plan(s)

2. The development must be carried out in complete accordance with the following approved documents:

Site Location Plan - Job No: 19001 Dwg No: 100 published 16th January 2020

Proposed Site Plan - Job No: 19001 Dwg No: 101 Rev A published 16th January 2020

Elevations - Job No: 19001 Dwg No: 102 Rev A published 16th January 2020

Elevations - Job No: 19001 Dwg No: 102 Rev B published 28th January 2020

Coal Mining Risk Assessment (ref CAT/GCB/NG/44278-001) published 16th January 2020

Reason: In order to define the permission.

Pre Commencement Condition(s) – ('true conditions precedent' – see notes for definition)

3. No development shall commence until further intrusive site investigations have been undertaken to establish the exact coal mining legacy issues on the site and a report explaining the findings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. In the event that site investigations confirm the need for remedial works to treat areas of shallow mine workings details of the remedial works shall also be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the site is safe for the development to proceed and the safety and stability of the proposed development, it is essential that this condition is complied with before the development is commenced.

Other Pre-Commencement, Pre-Occupancy and other Stage of Development Condition(s)

4. Prior to the installation of the ball stop fencing/netting full details of the design of the stanchions and the specification of the ball stop netting/fencing shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The netting/fencing shall thereafter be installed in accordance with the approved details. The netting shall be removed from September 30th and shall not be re-erected until March 20th each calendar year (outside of the cricket season) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality and to allow for variations in the timing of the cricket season.

5. Full details of new tree planting on the eastern and western sides of the ball-stop netting to be positioned on the northern boundary line shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before the erection of the support posts. The planting of new trees shall be provided in accordance with the agreed details and shall be planted no later than 28 days following the erection of the support posts.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.

6. The approved landscape works shall be implemented in accordance with the timescale set out in condition 5 above. Thereafter the landscaped areas shall be retained and they shall be cultivated and maintained for a period of 5 years from the date of implementation and any plant failures within that 5 year period shall be replaced.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.

7. The Local Planning Authority shall be notified in writing when the landscape works are completed.

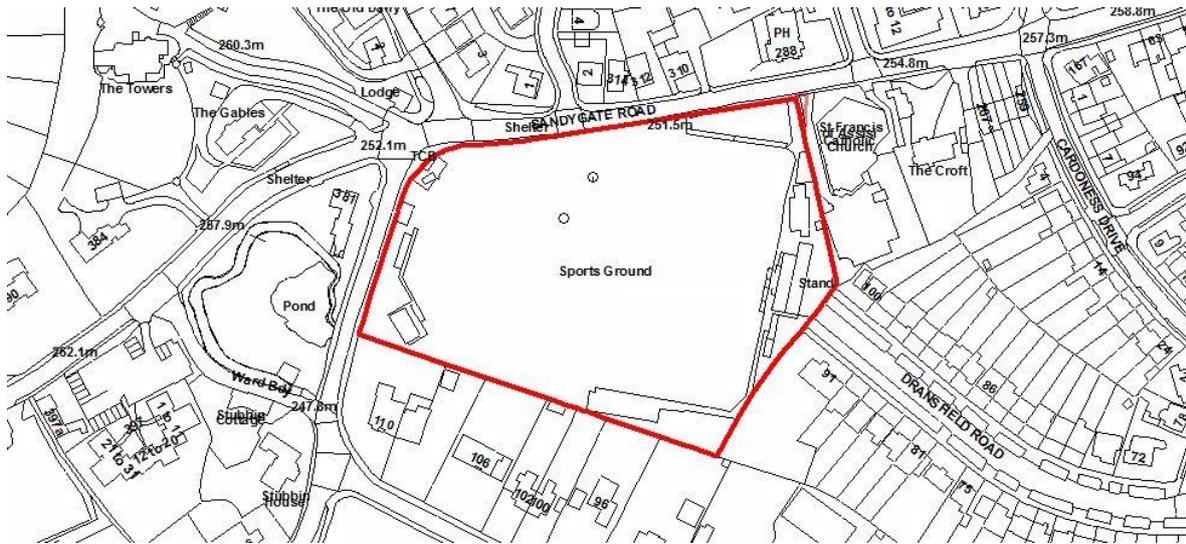
Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority can confirm when the maintenance periods specified in associated conditions/condition have commenced.

Other Compliance Conditions

Attention is Drawn to the Following Directives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has dealt with the planning application in a positive and proactive manner and sought solutions to problems where necessary in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Site Location



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LOCATION

The application site is Hallam Cricket Club situated at the Sandygate Sports Ground.

Hallam Cricket Club was founded in 1804 and is the oldest cricket ground in Sheffield and one of the oldest in Yorkshire. It has played at the Sandygate ground since its foundation. The ground is also the oldest football ground in the world, home to Hallam Football Club - the second oldest football club in the world.

According to the applicant's submission, Hallam Cricket Club currently has 350 members, more than 250 of whom are children, and runs a full programme of summer and winter training and matches. It currently has seven adult teams and 15 junior teams playing in local leagues as well as organising a wide range of non-competitive cricket based and community activities.

The site is within the middle of an established residential area, however the site is designated as an Open Space Area as defined by the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan.

The back gardens of housing fronting Ivy Park Road are located along the southern boundary. Carsick Hill Road lies to the west and Sandygate Road to the north with housing on the other side of those respective roads. The site falls from the Northern boundary to the south by approximately 4 m across the site.

The site is located immediately adjacent to the Ranmoor Conservation Area which lies to the south, commencing on Ivy Park Road. There are also two Grade II Listed Buildings known as The Lodge and The Towers which are located to the north-west of the site on the corner of Sandygate Road and Coldwell Lane. The Lodge is the most visible of these from the application site.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the erection of ball-stop netting to the northern and southern boundaries of the cricket ground to a maximum height of 15 metres.

The submitted site plan shows that the ball-stop netting along the Sandygate Road frontage (North boundary) is to span a length of 87 metres, with a section comprising a height of 15m, two sections of 12m high netting and a one section being 8 metres high. The southern boundary adjoining the rear boundaries of housing fronting Ivy Park Road is shown to have a span of 95 metres, with netting of 15metres high, a section at 13metres high and two sections of 7metre high netting.

The netting along the northern boundary would include 7 posts to hold the netting, with the southern boundary having 8 posts.

The submission states that in 2017 the first XI was promoted to the southern section of the Yorkshire League which is an ECB Premier League, the highest level of club cricket in the County. Games in this league were played at the historic Sandygate ground for two seasons but balls were being hit out of the ground on an increasingly regular basis and the Club has become concerned about the safety of playing this

level of cricket at a ground with such short boundaries. Cricket has evolved over the last decade and as a result of both technical advances in bat manufacture and the influence of T20 cricket which is very much focussed on big hitting, the ball is being hit harder and further than ever before, particularly at Premier League level.

In late 2018 the Club approached the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board, the game's governing body) for advice on this issue and the ECB recommended Labosport, a sports consultant in Nottingham.

The Club subsequently commissioned a risk assessment report on the safety of the ground from Labosport which recommended the installation of ball-stop netting.

As an initial risk mitigation measure, the Club moved first and second team games to its Crimicar Lane ground for the 2019 season. The submission states that Crimicar Lane was restored to Premier League standards in 2009 and has significantly longer boundaries and ball-stop netting on the northern edge of the ground. Third and fourth team games were moved to Sandygate Road. These two teams play "Community" level cricket where it is recognised that the ball is generally not hit as hard or as far.

The Club also commissioned an updated report from Labosport based on "Community" level being played at Sandygate and play being limited to the more central area of the cricket square. This revised report gave data on predicted trajectories of balls hit at this level of cricket and this was used to develop a practical solution (i.e. ball-stop netting) which would allow adult cricket to be played more safely at Sandygate in future.

PLANNING HISTORY

19/04172/TEL - Erection of 20m monopole and associated equipment cabinets (Application for determination if approval required for siting and appearance) – Refused

This prior approval application is currently subject of an appeal.

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

A site notice was posted on 7th February 2020 with an expiry date for comments of 3rd March 2020.

Olivia Blake MP for Sheffield Hallam has objected on the following grounds:

- 15m high netting would be unsightly and overbearing.
- It would affect visual amenity including two Grade II listed buildings and the Ranmoor Conservation Area.
- Poles at 32cm diameter would be out of character with existing street furniture.
- The quality of Sport England's consultation features inaccuracies, as raised by a constituent.

Cllr Anne Murphy has objected on the following grounds:

- The 15 metre height is equivalent to a four to five storey building.
- Netting would be within 13 metres of properties therefore being excessively overbearing.
- Posts and netting will resemble a prison.
- Within 25 metres of Grade II Listed The Lodge and The Towers.
- Cause harm to nearby Ranmoor Conservation Area.
- Question why retractable posts cannot be used.
- Planning Officers deemed a 15m monopole unacceptable.
- Concerns relating to bats and birds.
- Veteran sycamore tree would be lost.
- Understands the benefits of reducing risk, but the scheme will not stop many of the balls.
- Sensible approach to move senior cricket to Crimicar Lane.

26 letters of objections have been received from local residents.

The objections are summarised below:

Material Planning Considerations

Need

- Support the measures for safety and property outside ground and for cricket to continue, but cannot rationalise the Labosport findings with the proposed netting.
- The nets at 15 metres high do not comply with the Labosport report's recommendations therefore there would be loss of amenity (views) for an insufficient reduction of risk.
- High risk of balls being hit over the netting due to height not complying with Labosport report.
- Reduction of ball strike risk would not be to an acceptable level.
- Netting excessive and overreaction in relation to risk.
- A number of neighbours (both on Ivy Park Rd and Sandygate) state they have never had issues with cricket balls from the club.
- Road signage warning of risks to motorists and pedestrians would be better.
- Lack of transparency in Labosport Report – calculations to model ball trajectories have not been provided for scrutiny.
- Distances within Labosport Report are estimates, which are worthless without practical validation.
- Labosport Report only assess northern boundary, but scheme includes same netting height.
- Other solutions not explored, such as levelling wicket area, reorienting wickets or using equipment to de-power shots.
- Community cricket could be relocated to Crimicar Lane, whilst maintaining junior cricket at Sandygate.
- Local resident (Ivy Park Rd) has experienced some balls entering garden, but not resulting in injury or property damage – prepared to continue to put up with risk of ball incursions.

- Ball-stop netting will not define whether HCC continues to operate – Crimicar Lane can be used for senior teams, with junior cricket at Sandygate Road.
- If there are concerns about safety, the club would have acted sooner.
- If recent incident (pedestrian being hit) was catalyst the club should have stopped playing, but continued with known risk. Therefore can continue to play without netting needed.
- International and ex county cricket players have played at ground without netting on the ground – no one can hit harder and further than such players.
- Benefits only seen by small minority of community – cricketers.
- Proposal not in line with Sport England Guidance on pitch sizes.
- Should be for retractable poles and temporary netting.
- As scheme does not conform to Labosport Report, applicant and Council must be legally responsible for any balls that would come over 15 metre high netting.
- Labosport Report states that 15 metre would not reduce the risk to an acceptable level.
- The size of the cricket pitch does not comply with Sports England guidance for professional cricket.
- By accepting the proposal, the Council would themselves become legally responsible for their failure to adequately protect pedestrians, vehicles and residents in line with the specialist report.
- The sensible approach would be to move senior cricket to Crimicar Lane.

Appearance & Heritage Assets

- 15 metre high poles and netting will have substantial visual impact.
- Impact on nearby Conservation Area.
- A telecommunication monopole was refused opposite the site, current proposal will have more impact than that.
- Impact on The Towers and The Lodge which are Grade II listed.
- Loss of trees which contribute to environment.
- Eyesore and unsightly in picturesque residential suburb.
- Structure would be similar height to nearby trees.
- Visual monstrosity – 15 metres is equivalent to a four-storey building.
- Netting will appear as a prison.
- Netting 3 x times height of coach house within garden on Ivy Park Rd.
- The poles at the diameter shown would be out of character with street furniture.
- Would not comply with CS Policy CS74, UDP Policy BE5 or Chapter 12 of the NPPF.
- Would result in 'less than substantial harm' set against para 196 of the NPPF.
- The safety benefits of scheme vastly exaggerated, therefore public benefits are non-existent and do not outweigh harm that would be caused.
- Vertical poles out of character with local area which is picturesque.
- Resident references a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) to assess visibility of a development.
- Details submitted indicating visual receptors who might be able to see the development - 454 residential properties within 300m of the proposal fall within the ZTV.

- Best case scenario 444 residential properties would be able to see the proposal within 300m. – demonstrates the visual impact.

Ecology

- Bat survey required. Impact on access to their feeding areas.
- Potential impact to wild birds such as Owls, potentially injuring or killing any caught in net.
- Impact on veteran tree.

Residential Amenity

- Noise nuisance from netting due to windy, exposed location.
- Noise already generated from floodlight cables, additional steel poles with ropes and pulleys will generate noise.
- Noise was not considered at HCC public meeting.
- Reduction of light into gardens of Ivy Park Rd.
- Netting not to be lowered after games, reducing outlook during the summer time for Ivy Park Rd residents. Poles are to be up all year, impacting outlook through out the year.
- The nets would block sun every morning to houses on Sandygate Grange Drive.
- Garden of 106 Ivy Park would have entire 15 metre netting on back boundary; worsened by drop in level of garden of approx. 1.5 metres. (16.5 metre height relative to 106).
- Nets and posts would be overbearing, the height being equivalent to a four/five storey building.
- The proposal would be overly intrusive to a nearby neighbour and is likely to pass the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold test.

Highways concerns

- The junction is notorious for heavy traffic, the scheme has potential to deflect drivers' attention from driving.

Other concerns

- Benefits do not outweigh the negatives of the proposal.
- ECB are funding the proposal and other projects for club – maybe funding dependent on netting.
- A number of neighbours acknowledge the club's position; however they do not think benefits outweigh the harm.
- Tree survey not submitted.
- Risk to veteran Sycamore tree in north-western corner which should be protected as is important landscape feature.
- It is world's oldest football pitch.
- Planning Officers found a telecommunications mast of 15 metres in height proposed nearby to be unacceptable.

- The floodlights are shown as 17 metres on the elevations, whereas they are approx. 15.8 metres. The Telecommunications application mentioned them to be 15 metres.
- Why is the western boundary not being protected?
- Sport England's consultation is inaccurate, as it assumes the proposal is in accordance with the Labosport Report when it is not.
- ECB comments are not neutral as they are funding the proposal.

Non-material Planning Considerations

- A shadow-tracking study carried out indicating posts and nets will reduce power output from PV panels on house opposite site.
- Loss of views over Mayfield Valley and to Ringinglow from neighbouring residences.
- Impact on desirability and values of houses.
- No information regarding maintenance of netting.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and emphasises its role in contributing positively to making places better for people, whilst not attempting to impose architectural styles or particular tastes.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF requires that development that accords with up to date policies should be approved without delay. In instances where policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when weighed against policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Paragraph 47 requires development to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

USE

Paragraph 97 of the NPPF also states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

- 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; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

UDP Policies LR4 and LR5 seek to protect Open Space Areas. Core Strategy Policy CS47 seeks to safeguard open space.

The local plan policies broadly align with paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

The applicant has submitted a Boundary Risk Assessment Technical Report undertaken by Labosport in support of the proposal. The findings of the report confirm there is a need for ball-stop netting on the site.

It can be argued that ball-stop netting is reflective of the current use of the site, however assessment has to consider whether the proposal is a proportionate response to the risk involved. Consideration is also necessary in terms of the potential visual impact the ball-stop netting will have upon the local area.

The applicant's Boundary Risk Assessment is a desk-top study which uses modelling to assess the risk of cricket balls being hit over the boundary of the cricket field to surrounding areas. It assesses the site and distances to ascertain the risk of balls landing in adjacent areas. The wickets are orientated in an East to West direction. The cricket club have informed Labosport that an increasing number of balls have surpassed the Northern boundary adjacent Sandygate Road, which is a busy road with a bus route. The northern boundary has the shortest distance from the edge of the wicket. This risk assessment therefore focused on the Northern orientation.

The report assessed the following scenarios and provided recommendations for each:

- The club relocate their 1st and 2nd teams meaning only community and junior level cricket will be played
- The clubs 1st and 2nd teams used the cricket square in full
- Restrict 'professional' level cricket to the 5 central strips

Whilst the cricket square from where balls are hit is located centrally within the cricket field, the distances from it to the boundaries vary due to the irregular shape of the site. The focus of the boundary assessment was based on the shortest distances from the edge of the cricket square to the boundary and hence worst case scenario.

In respect of the northern boundary adjoining Sandygate Road, the report notes that the distance from the nearest edge of the cricket square to the boundary is 32 metres at the shortest distance (community level cricket) and 38 metres (professional cricket to the 5 central wickets). At these shortest distances, the report concludes that for community level cricket a 19 metre high net will not stop all shots but it would significantly reduce their frequency of exceeding the boundary. In order

to almost completely remove risk, a 25 metre high net would be required which is unlikely to be practical or proportionate as mentioned within the report.

Professional level cricket would require nets of at least 24 metres in height to reduce risk, but would require 30 metre high nets to almost completely remove the risk. This is accounting for a 32 metre boundary distance.

Limiting play to the central 5 wickets for professional players would require nets of 25 metres high to stop all but the fastest shots. In order to almost completely remove risk, a 32 metre high net would be required. Again the report states that in both of these instances, the height of the net is unlikely to be practical or proportionate.

Following the findings of the Boundary Risk Assessment, the Club has used those findings as a basis to create a proportionate response to the risk. The current proposal is based on limiting adult cricket to the central six wickets of the 13 available at Sandygate in order to maximise boundary size and contain the requirement for ball stop netting within reasonable bounds. Netting is to be provided along both northern and southern boundaries at varying heights based on the trajectory predictions in the Labosport report. The maximum height of netting would be 15 metres.

The netting proposed is 50mm high density polypropylene attached by a pulley system to tubular steel posts, 323mm diameter, finished in green

Sport England has advised that they have no objection to the application and have also sought the views of the England Cricket Board (ECB) on this proposal. The ECB has commented with the following:

The proposed ball stop mitigation is fit for purpose and ECB is fully supportive of the proposal where Hallam CC is responding to a ball strike incident.

The proposal aligns to the findings of a Labosport UK ball strike risk assessment referenced LSUK.18-0768.

The Yorkshire Cricket Board's (YCB) Head of Region (South) states:

"I have been working with Hallam CC for 12 years. During this time the Club has seen tremendous growth and is now one of the leading strategic development Clubs in Yorkshire.

The Club boasts 202 All Starts Cricketers (age 5-8), which is the national entry to Cricket level program, this being highest number of All Stars participants in England and Wales.

The Club also have 15 Junior sides; U9s to U17s, 5 Senior sides, 2 Mid-week teams, a Women's Softball side and host Visually Impaired and Physical and Learning Disability matches for the Yorkshire VI Kings and the Yorkshire Terriers.

The issue with ball strike has caused the club significant issues; the Club want to offer the safest community cricket programs they can, for their community. Hallam CC is an absolute pleasure to work with and is a beacon to all other Clubs.

The YCB values this relationship greatly and Hallam are a critical Club in driving the game forward and inspiring the next generation to choose cricket as their life long sport.”

It can be accepted that the Cricket Club has a duty of care for persons and property where the risk of ball strike is foreseeable. The height of the netting is informed by the risk assessment to provide a practical solution to lowering risk to neighbours and members of the public to a proportionate level (elimination of risk altogether would require much higher netting but this would not be practicable or proportionate, a permanent solution is however necessary).

Discussions have taken place as to whether retractable or demountable netting can be proposed to limit the potential impact upon the appearance of the street scene, so that netting is only in place during cricket matches.

The Club has contacted a manufacturer who has provided reasons as to why retractable and/or demountable netting is not viable. This is due in part to the height of the proposal, wind loading, and the consequential necessity for permanent durable supports.

The comments provided by the manufacturer would suggest that demountable netting is not viable in this instance. The Club has however agreed to remove the netting outside the cricket season, although the posts would remain in situ. A condition could be imposed to secure this.

Local residents have stated that re-orientating the wickets has not been considered. Although noted, re-orientating the wickets would not remove the ball-strike risk to the northern boundary. There is ball-strike risk for on all boundaries at present, however the northern boundary is at most risk due to the short distance. The proposed scheme is a response to this issue and it is noted that the number of wickets to be used has been reduced to the central 6 wickets.

The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principle use of the site as a playing field and would not harm the character of the Open Space Area as it would be reflective of the use of the site, nor would the scheme adversely affect the quantity or quality of the playing field. However, further assessment is required in terms of the potential impact of the netting upon the appearance of the street scene.

The proposal complies with UDP Policies LR4 and LR5, Core Strategy Policy CS47, and the Government’s planning policy guidance contained in the NPPF.

DESIGN, APPEARANCE & IMPACT ON HERITAGE ASSETS

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF identifies that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 127 sets out a series of expectations including ensuring

that developments add to the quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture; layout and landscaping; are sympathetic to the local character and surrounding built environment; establish and maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of a site and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

UDP policies BE5 and Core Strategy Policy CS74 seeks to achieve good design. The site is surrounding by an established housing area and therefore UDP Policy H14 is also applicable in terms of design. The aims of these policies are consistent with the principles of Paragraphs 124, 127 and 130 of the NPPF.

The netting along the northern boundary facing Sandygate Road would have the greatest visual impact. The netting along the southern boundary would not be significantly visible from wider view, although due to the height at a maximum of 15 metres, it might be visible in glimpsed views from Carsick Hill Road.

Consideration is given to the fact that there is currently a small section of fencing that fronts Sandygate Road adjacent to the football pitch, however this is at a significantly lower height than the proposed netting. The significant height of the ball-stop netting at a maximum height of 15 metres, running a span of 87 metres along Sandygate Road will have a prominent appearance from the street and it cannot be considered that such netting could be considered to contribute visually to the local area. It is however appreciated that the netting is reflective of the use of the site and the applicant has provided reasons as to why such netting is required. There would ultimately be benefits of the proposal in terms of safety for both neighbours and pedestrians walking past, in addition to reducing general disturbance caused from cricket balls being hit over the site boundary. A number of local residents have stated that they have not experienced any issues with cricket balls, whereas some state that they have but are happy to live adjacent knowing full well of the risk of ball-strikes.

The netting would run parallel to Sandygate Road and therefore it would be most prominent when traversing up Sandygate Grange Drive opposite, or when approaching the junction of Coldwell Lane with Sandygate Road. When traversing in a westerly or easterly direction the netting would not be significantly prominent as it would sit parallel to the street, although this is not to say it would not be visible. The applicant has stated that they are agreeable to planting additional trees on both the eastern and western corners of the proposed netting facing Sandygate Road. Whilst new trees would not completely screen the netting, it would help in reducing the visual impact when traversing westerly and easterly along Sandygate Road. New tree planting can be secured by condition.

The Club has agreed to remove the netting outside the cricket season which will reduce the visual impact to the street scene. The posts would however remain in situ and visible throughout the year. It is however acknowledged that there are floodlights on the site which are taller and wider than the proposed poles. The posts would not appear dissimilar to the floodlights or nearby street lighting columns. The applicant has explored the possibility of having posts that are demountable, however it is not considered viable.

A local resident has rightly mentioned that a telecommunications mast was refused prior approval only last year and that the proposed netting would have a greater impact than the mast. This is acknowledged, however it was concluded that the mast could be positioned in an alternative, less prominent and intrusive position, whereas the proposed nets under this application are specifically proposed in connection with the established use of the site, of which is a historic cricket club.

Without the introduction of the netting, the Club states that adult cricket cannot be played at Sandygate Road due to the risk of ball-strike to pedestrians and neighbouring property. Whilst it is noted that the netting will not prevent all balls from exceeding the cricket ground, the scheme aims to provide a proportionate response to reduce such risk. The Club has also mentioned that first and second teams play at the Crimicar Lane ground and there is no capacity for the third and fourth (community level) teams to play there and therefore these two teams would cease to run. In light of this, weight has to be given to the benefits of introducing the proposed netting, which will ultimately support the viability of adult cricket at what is a historic club which serves a significant portion of the wider sporting community.

Whilst the site does not fall within a conservation area it does adjoin the Ranmoor Conservation Area which is located to the south on Ivy Park Road. There is also a Grade II Listed Building known as The Lodge which is located to the north-west of the site on the corner of Sandygate Road and Coldwell Lane. Assessment of the proposal is needed in respect of these heritage assets.

UDP Policy BE19 identifies that development is expected to preserve the character and appearance of a listed building and its setting. UDP Policy BE16 seeks to preserve or enhance conservation areas. This policy aligns with the following guidance in the NPPF.

The NPPF seeks to protect heritage assets from unacceptable harm (paragraph 190 NPPF). Paragraphs 193 to 196 of the NPPF identify how the effects and impacts on heritage assets should be considered. Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

It goes on to say that any harm to the significance of a heritage asset requires 'clear and convincing justification', that substantial harm to Grade II listed buildings should be exceptional (paragraph 194); and that, 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal' (paragraph 196).

In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that the local planning authority shall have 'special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

With reference to paragraphs 193 to 196, consideration has to be given to the impact upon the setting of the heritage assets – The Grade II Listed building known as The Lodge and the adjacent Ranmoor Conservation Area.

The nearest part of the net would be approximately 24 metres from the front elevation of The Lodge. It is not considered that the proposal would harm the setting of The Lodge due to both the separation distance and the fact that the netting would not restrict or interfere with views of this attractive listed building. It is considered that the netting would lead to less than substantial harm upon the listed building.

The netting proposed on the southern boundary line would immediately abut the Ranmoor Conservation Area. This netting would not be significantly visible from wider public view, although it may offer glimpsed views due to the height of 15 metres. Nevertheless the position of the netting in such close proximity to the Ranmoor Conservation Area is considered to amount to substantial harm.

In any instance, netting at a height of 15 metres is not going to provide any visual benefits. Consideration should be given to the proposed need for the installation of the ball-stop netting as discussed within this report. Without the proposed netting, it is understood that adult cricket will cease to occur at Sandygate Road. The Cricket Club is historic and is a significant part of the Sheffield sporting community. Weight therefore has to be given to this benefit. Consequently it is considered that the proposed need and benefits would outweigh the harm that the netting would have on the setting of the Grade II Listed Building, the conservation area and also the street scene.

The proposal is not considered compliant with UDP Policies BE5, BE16 and BE19, nor Core Strategy Policy CS74, however it is considered that the proposal would be compliant with the NPPF as the benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh the visual harm provided by the proposal.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Although the site is within an Open Space policy area, it is surrounded by an established housing area and therefore UDP Policy H14 is relevant.

Policy H14(c) states that in Housing Areas, development will be permitted provided that the site would not be over-developed or deprive residents of light, privacy or security, or cause serious loss of existing garden space which would harm the character of the neighbourhood.

The above policy closely aligns with the aims of Paragraph 123 c) and 127 (f) of the NPPF and therefore weight is given to the aims of H14 as well as the NPPF.

The proposal will ultimately provide benefits for neighbouring occupiers in preventing the likelihood of cricket balls being hit into their grounds, although it will not completely remove this risk.

The proposal would be separated by the highway from those houses on the opposite side of Sandygate Road. Although clearly visible to those occupants it is not

considered that the netting or posts would overbear or overshadow these neighbouring houses. The netting would consist of fine-gauge netting that would allow light through. The posts are not dissimilar to street lighting columns and therefore cannot be considered to cause harm to neighbouring living conditions.

Although the netting on the southern boundary would be positioned up close to the boundary line with gardens, it is not considered that the netting would cause such harm that it would affect their living conditions to a detrimental level. Outlook would be affected to some degree, however views would still be afforded through the netting. It is accepted that the height of the posts is substantial, however they are spaced apart and it is not considered that these would be significantly harmful. It is therefore not considered the proposal justifies a refusal based upon impact on neighbours living conditions.

For the reasons above, the proposal is not considered to cause undue harm to neighbouring living conditions and is considered to accord with UDP Policy H14 (c) and the aims of the NPPF.

TREES

Policy BE6 states that good landscape design will be required in all new developments. This policy is consistent with Paragraph 127 b) of the NPPF.

The proposal includes the removal of three trees on the northern boundary and pruning work to some of the trees at the north-western corner of the site. Three new trees are to be planted in the area between the scorebox and the groundsman's storage containers and in the area of the existing pavilion. The club has also agreed to plant trees on the eastern side of the netting. A condition is recommended to secure details of the tree planting and to ensure they are planted prior to any netting being installed.

The submitted plan shows that the netting will be very close to the trees within the north-western corner of the site. Although the submitted plans shows the retention of these trees, the construction of the support posts will likely mean that at least one of the trees within the corner will have to be removed. This is not ideal, as the loss of this tree would have some visual impact when viewing the site from Sandygate Road when approaching from the west and from the approach to the site from Coldwell Lane. It would also mean the proposed netting would be more prominent as a consequence. The trees impacted are read as part of a large group in views from the east and the loss of one, or perhaps two of these trees is not considered significant from this view point.

In mitigation, the club has agreed to plant new trees and therefore the aforementioned condition can secure appropriate replacement and/or additional tree planting in this location. The replacement planting will not immediately resolve the visual impact of losing the tree but over time this will provide suitable replacement and in general the new planting will aid in reducing the impact of the netting.

In this context the proposals are considered acceptable in respect of policy BE6 and paragraph 127 of the NPPF.

ECOLOGY

Paragraph 170 a) and d) of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, minimise impacts on and provide net gains in biodiversity.

Paragraph 175 a) of the NPPF identifies that if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Part d) of paragraph 175 goes on to state that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Policy GE11 of the UDP seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment ensuring that the design, siting and landscaping of development respects and promotes nature conservation and includes measures to reduce any potentially harmful effects of development.

Concerns have been raised by local residents that birds and bats could become entangled in the proposed ball stop netting.

Advice from the Council's Ecology Unit states that such occurrence is likely to be very rare. The netting is to consist of a 50mm high density polypropylene net. This finer mesh netting will reduce the chance of birds of all sizes from becoming entangled in the netting and conditions will be attached to secure an appropriate specification to minimise risks. The netting is also only to be in place during the cricket season and would thereafter be removed, further reducing the potential for birds to become entangled.

With respect to bats, the Ecology Unit state that the netting should not pose a problem to them as their echolocation would sense an obstacle in their path and they would avoid it.

In terms of biodiversity enhancements, the scheme is to include new tree planting which will provide a small net gain in biodiversity by providing possible nesting opportunities for birds. There is little opportunity for further biodiversity enhancements to be secured in this instance.

The proposal is therefore considered compliant with UDP Policy GE11 and the aims of the NPPF.

HIGHWAYS

Development should ensure highway safety as required by paragraph 108 of the NPPF. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF further 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'.

The ball stop netting is unlikely to affect visibility on the highway as it is to run parallel with Sandygate Road; however it will have a safety benefit in terms of preventing balls being hit onto the highway.

It is therefore considered that this complies with the aims of the above NPPF paragraphs.

COAL MINING

Part of the site is located within a Coal Mining Referral Area. A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The report concludes that intrusive investigations are required before development is commenced. This can be secured by condition.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The application site relates to Hallam Cricket Club which was founded in 1804 and is the oldest cricket ground in Sheffield and one of the oldest in Yorkshire. The UDP Proposals Map identifies the site as being within an Open Space Area.

The Cricket Club states that balls have been hit out of the ground on an increasingly regular basis and the Club has become concerned about the safety of playing both professional level and community level cricket at a ground with such short boundaries. The Club has moved their first and second teams to their Crimicar Lane ground to limit the occurrence of balls being hit out of the ground, however they wish to retain their remaining adult teams at Sandygate Road.

Planning permission is sought for the erection of ball-stop netting to the northern and southern boundaries of the cricket ground to a maximum height of 15 metres.

15 metres is less than the recommended height for community level cricket recommended in the Labosport Report, however the Club intends to limit cricket to the central 6 wickets and the 15 metres is considered a proportionate response to the risk with consideration also given to the appearance upon the street. Any higher netting is considered to exacerbate the visual impact. The Club therefore proposes netting to a maximum of 15 metres in height as a means to reduce the risk of ball-strikes (although it will not completely remove this risk) with consideration given to the appearance upon the street scene.

In this instance the proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principle use of the site as a playing field and is not considered to harm the character of the Open Space Area as ball-stop netting is reflective of the use of the site, nor would the proposal adversely affect the quantity or quality of the playing field.

There are no objections from Sport England and the English & Wales Cricket Board are supportive of the scheme.

It is acknowledged that ball-stop netting at a height of 15 metres is not going to provide any visual benefits to the street scene or local area, however consideration

has been given to the need for the netting and the benefits of continued adult cricket at this historic ground. The Club has explored the possibility of having retractable or demountable netting, however a manufacturer states that it is not practical or viable due in part to the significant height of the netting. The Club acknowledge the potential visual impact of the netting and therefore have agreed to introduce new tree planting on the eastern and western ends of the netting fronting Sandygate Road and to remove the netting outside of the cricket season (the posts would remain in situ all year round).

Without the proposed netting, it is understood that adult cricket will cease to occur at Sandygate Road due to the ball-strike risk. The Club has confirmed that there is not capacity at their Crimicar Lane site and therefore their third and fourth teams would not be able to play. The Cricket Club is historic and is a significant part of the Sheffield sporting community. Significant weight therefore has to be given to this benefit, as it would mean the loss of adult cricket from this historic ground. Consequently it is considered that the proposed benefits of installing the netting would outweigh the harm that the netting would have on the street scene and the less than substantial harm it would have on the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed Building (The Lodge) and the Ranmoor Conservation Area.

It is not considered that the netting would provide unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the residents of neighbouring properties.

There are no highway implications to this proposal.

The proposal is considered to comply with UDP Policies LR4 and LR5, Core Strategy Policy CS47, and the Government's planning policy guidance contained in the NPPF.

It is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions securing the removal of the netting outside of the cricket season (posts would remain) and to secure the planting of new trees.