

Application Reference Number:	2025/0605
Proposal Description:	New multi-use games area (MUGA) sports pitch and associated works
Location:	Thurgoland CE Primary School, Halifax Road, Thurgoland, Sheffield, S35 7AL

Recommendation:

Approve subject to conditions

Site Description

The site is the Thurgoland CE Primary School, Halifax Road, Thurgoland, Sheffield, S35 7AL. This proposal relates to the playing fields at the rear of the site, which are used for school activities during term time. The school is located off of Halifax Road and benefits from a small number of off-street parking spaces. There is a public park with a football pitch located on the opposite side of the road which also provides a space for locals to enjoy.

The local area is predominantly residential in character, with the properties being a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings. There are residential properties on either side of the school on Halifax Road. There are a small number of commercial properties in the area, consisting of some pubs, a medical centre, shop and other small businesses. The back of the site leads on to agricultural fields which are actively used.

Planning History

There are no recent or relevant applications associated with this site.

Proposed Development

This application seeks permission for a multi-use games area (MUGA), at Thurgoland CE Primary School, Halifax Road, Thurgoland, Sheffield, S35 7AL. The scheme would be constructed on the current field at the rear of the school. The fields are not currently usable all year round due to health and safety concerns (Flooding/waterlogging and pests from neighbouring fields). Therefore, the school has submitted this application to allow the school children extended space for activities all year round. The site would not be open to members of the public and would not be open on weekends or after school

times. The scheme is for the use of school children only and will only be in use at term time and during school hours.

The applicant has submitted a biodiversity assessment along with plans of the proposal. They have also provided a justification to Sports England for their decision to ensure that the scheme is only used in conjunction with the school.

Relevant Policies

The Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for Barnsley consists of the Barnsley Local Plan (adopted January 2019).

The Local Plan review was approved at the full Council meeting on 24th November 2022. The review determined that the Local Plan remains fit for purpose and is adequately delivering its objectives. This means no updates to the Local Plan, in whole or in part, are to be carried out ahead of a further review. The next review is due to take place in 2027 or earlier if circumstances, require it.

The school is within an urban fabric allocation with the playing fields directly to the rear identified as school grounds

Policies of relevance to the application are as follows:

- Local Plan Allocation – Urban Fabric
- Policy SD1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy GD1: General Development
- Policy D1: High quality design and place making
- Policy Poll1: Pollution Control and Protection
- Policy T3: New development and Sustainable Travel
- Policy T4: New Development and Transport Safety
- Policy CC1: Climate change
- Policy BI01: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance

In December 2024, The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") which is the most recent revision of the original Framework, published first in 2012 and updated a number of times, providing the overarching planning framework for England.

It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. This revised document has replaced the earlier planning policy statements, planning policy guidance and various policy letters and circulars, which are now cancelled.

Central to the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is at the heart of the framework (paragraph 10) and plans and decisions should apply this presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11). The NPPF confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental; each of these aspects are mutually dependent.

The most relevant sections are:

- Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 - Decision making
- Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places

The National Design Guidance (2019) is a material consideration and sets out ten characteristics of well-designed places based on planning policy expectations. A written ministerial statement states that local planning authorities should take it into account when taking decisions.

Supplementary Planning Documents:

In line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, Barnsley has adopted twenty-eight Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) following the adoption of the Local Plan in January 2019. The most pertinent SPD's in this case are:

- Biodiversity and geodiversity

Consultations

Thurgoland Parish Council – Have stated that they have no comments to make

Drainage – No objections.

Sports England – No objections, subject to the following conditions:

- No development shall commence until further details of the design and layout of the construction of the MUGA have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The MUGA shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.

- The artificial pitch shall not be used other than for outdoor sport and play.

Pollution Control – Has asked for additional information, however dialog was opened between the Pollution Officer and Planning Officer about the needs of the additional information. The decision can be found in the report below.

Highways – The Council’s Highways officer has not been consulted upon on the scheme is not changing operational capacity of the site nor is it changing hours of operation. Rather it is only changing the material in which the sports field will be constructed from.

Ecology – No objections, subject to the following conditions:

- Biodiversity Gain Condition.
- A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP), completed by a suitably qualified ecologist will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works on site. The BEMP shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
 - A recent landscape plan detailing the location of proposed habitat creation, retention and enhancement;
 - Management aims and prescriptions detailing the methods required to create, retain and/or enhance each habitat at the required quality for a period of five years;
 - A timetable of delivery for each habitat;
 - A schedule of actions to be undertaken in case signs of failing are identified. The schedules must include details of technique(s) to be used, equipment to be used, roles and relevant expertise of personnel and organisations involved and timing of actions including submission of monitoring report to the local planning authority.

Representations

The application has been advertised in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015. A site notice was posted at the site.

Two objections were received raising the following issues:

- Impacts on neighbouring amenities
- Impacts on highway safety
- Loss of greenfield space and impact on environment
- Potential for antisocial behaviour
- Would be less concerned if it was only for school use during school hours

- Reduces space for less sport minded children
- Drainage

Assessment

The main issues for consideration are as follows:

- The impact on the character of the area
- The impact on neighbouring residential properties
- Sports provision/ Sport England

For the purposes of considering the balance in this application the following planning weight is referred to in this report using the following scale unless the NPPF establishes a specific weight:

- Substantial
- Considerable
- Significant
- Moderate
- Modest
- Limited
- Little or no

Principle of Development

The principle of the development is acceptable as it would be providing sports provision to an existing school for the benefits of the students only. The MUGA is to be used in conjunction with school use and no other use. The improvement of school facilities is supported by the LPA, and this one would lead to improvements of sports facilities.

Residential Amenity

The application site is currently used as a playing field for the school, and the applicant has stated that the time of usage will not be changing. The school and playing fields are an established site and thus there would be no change of use or noise levels. The scheme is to change the current material of the playing fields to ensure that the site can be used all year round. As currently the playing fields cannot be used all year round due to health and safety concerns.

The Council's Pollution Control Officer has been consulted upon the application and initially raised concerns about the potential noise levels but their main concerns related to the use outside of school hours. They were therefore comfortable that if it was

conditioned to use of school hours term time only then this would negate the need for any further details to be provided and could mitigate the impact on nearby residents. The applicant had stated that the MUGA would only be in use during term times and during school hours and as such the Planning Officer believes that the scheme would not have a detrimental effect on the residential properties around the site.

As such if the application is approved a condition shall be attached to ensure that the MUGA is only used within term time and within school hours to ensure that the amenity of the residential properties is protected. Another condition shall be attached to ensure that the construction of the MUGA doesn't have a detrimental impact on the residents around the site. Moderate weight is given to this material consideration.

Visual Amenity

The development is sited at the rear of the school and is not visible from the public highway. Therefore, the development is likely to have little to no impact on the streetscene. The site has large mature trees which are along the south and west boundaries which also provide adequate screening for residential properties. Therefore, the LPA deem that the scheme would be acceptable in terms of visual amenity. Considerable weight is given to this material consideration.

Sports England

Dialog was opened with Sports England as initially they opposed the scheme as they wanted to open the site to the public after school hours and wanted flood lights to be installed. However, the applicant explained that the site is only to be for school usage at school hours and does not intend to open it up to the public. The applicant also provided evidence to confirm that they understood that the new artificial pitch would require additional maintenance and a sinking fund to maintain the site. The applicant has taken measures to prepare for this.

Sports England continued to have reservations regarding the proposal; this included the following:

- Elements of the proposals do not comply with Sport England design guidance e.g. court markings and dimensions
- An alternative to citing the MUGA on the playing field
- The proposed MUGA is not tight against the playing field boundary and there is a further impact on the playing field made through a new area of biodiversity/forest school being established.

However, after further negotiation Sports England removed their objection to the scheme, subject to the following planning conditions being attached to the decision if approved:

- No development shall commence until further details of the design and layout of the construction of the MUGA have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The MUGA shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.
- The artificial pitch shall not be used other than for outdoor sport and play.

This is a reasonable compromise that has been made by Sports England, and the conditions are deemed to be acceptable as the scheme would positively benefit the children of the school. Therefore, if approval is granted the recommended conditions will be attached. Substantial weight is given to this material consideration.

Highways Safety

The Council's Highways Officer has not been consulted upon on this application, as the scheme is not to increase the number of children or staff at the school nor would it change the operating hours of the school. Therefore, an increase in parking spaces/facilities would not be required. The proposal would also not affect the access into the site.

Biodiversity

The applicant submitted a biodiversity net gain assessment report in support of the application, along with an associated Statutory Biodiversity Metric and condition assessment sheet. The Council's Ecology Officer has been consulted upon on this app and has made the following comments. "The report and metric indicate the baseline value of the habitat currently present on site and sets out the proposals to achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity. Additional native tree planting in association with existing trees to the southern boundary of the site is proposed to address the loss of low distinctiveness grassland, which is welcomed. Due to the limited management required for tree planting, it is considered unnecessary to condition a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and it is recommended that a five-year Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) is conditioned to ensure the tree planting is implemented and appropriately managed whilst the trees are becoming established". As such the Planning Officer finds that this condition is justified and if approval is granted these shall be attached.

Drainage

The Council's Drainage Section have inspected the plans and raised no objections to the scheme

Planning Balance and Conclusion

For the reasons stated in the report above the proposal is granted approval subject to the conditions also outlined. The scheme would benefit children at the school by providing improved sports facilities which would give all the children at the school the opportunity to have access to try sports.

Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions

Justification

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ARTICLE 35 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE ORDER 2015

Due regard has been given to Article 8 and Protocol 1 of Article 1 of the European Convention for Human Rights Act 1998 when considering objections, the determination of the application and the resulting recommendation. It is considered that the recommendation will not interfere with the applicant's and/or any objector's right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.