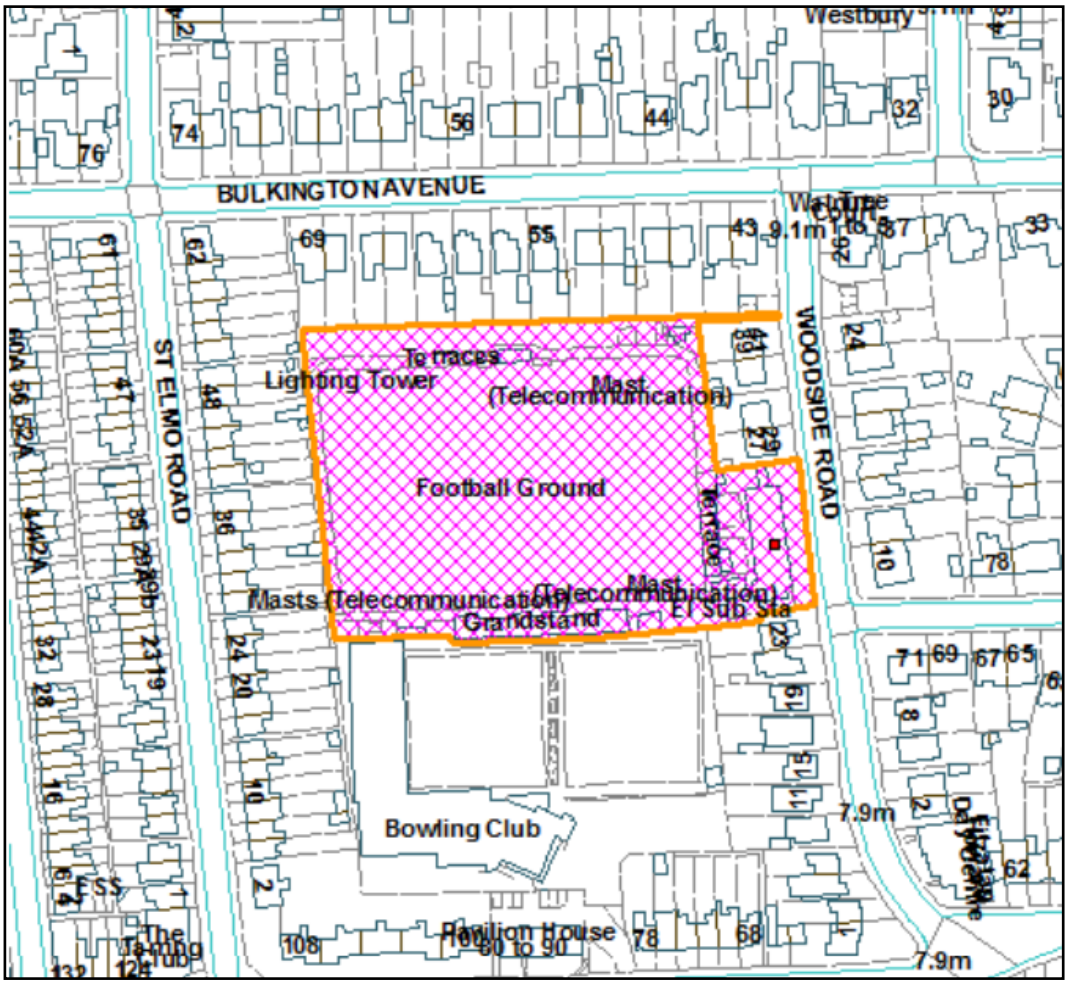
Application Number:	**AWDM/0303/24**	**Recommendation - Delegate for APPROVAL subject to further comments from the Highway Authority.**
Site:	**Worthing Football Club, Woodside Road, Worthing**	
Proposal:	**Erection of a new covered north stand 6 metres high reducing to 5.0 metres at the rear, 90 metres long by 6 metres deep. Erection of new building in north west corner, to provide WCs and Food & Beverage bar 2.69 metres high, 11.6 metres wide by 6.87 metres deep.**	
Applicant:	Mr Keith Mitchell	Ward: Gaisford
Agent:	Miss Debbie Marriage	
Case Officer:	Gary Peck	



Not to Scale

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Proposal, Site and Surroundings

This application seeks full permission for the erection of a new covered north stand and a WC/food and beverage building in the north west corner of the ground.

The stand is stated to be 6 metres in height, 90 metres long by 6 metres deep, accommodating 14 rows of standing spectators. The stand will have a maximum capacity of 1,818 people which represents an increase of 878 over the existing capacity of 940 people who can be accommodated on the north side of the pitch. A gantry will be installed in the centre of the stand, below roof height, for TV crews.

It is further advised that the stand will accommodate home and away supporters, with the space in the away fans section being adjustable depending on the number of away fans expected for each game. Behind the stand will be a 1.65 metre wide walkway, of permeable material, to facilitate pedestrian movement and comply with fire and health and safety regulations. A 1.8m close boarded fence will be erected along the back edge of the walkway. Five spaces for wheelchair users will be provided at the front of the stand, bringing the total number of spaces for wheelchair spectators in the ground to twelve.

In respect of the new building in the north west corner, a single storey building is proposed which will provide male and female WCs, separate accessible toilet, and a food & beverage bar. The building is proposed to be 11.6m wide by 6.87 metres deep, and 2.69 metres high. External walls will be clad with profiled metal sheet cladding, with a flat roof over. The building would be the west of the new stand, therefore separated from it by an existing floodlight pylon (the pylons are not affected by the current proposals). A cypress tree, the westernmost of a line of such trees that stretch along the majority of the northern boundary of the site, would be removed as part of the proposal.

The football ground is surrounded on 2 ½ sides by residential dwellings. Bulkington Avenue is to the north, consisting of detached and semi-detached properties. The dwellings are largely screened by the trees mentioned above, except for number 69 in the north western corner of the site, while number 67 would become more visible as a result of the removal of the tree. At present, the covered accommodation on the northern side of the ground consists of a small shelter situated in between the manager's dugout and 3 quite shallow terraced steps with a grass bank behind. There is an existing food and beverage offering in the north eastern corner of the ground.

At the western end of the ground are properties in St Elmo Road, which are generally more visible from within the ground. A new stand has recently been constructed at this end of the ground and is the subject of a separate report elsewhere on the agenda. To the east, there is a currently part open/part covered terrace area with 2 residential buildings separated into flats clearly visible behind. The entrances to the ground are on the eastern side of the ground in Woodside Road.

The largest stand is to the south of the ground consisting of a raised seating area centrally located and extending about half the distance to each end. A bowling club is located behind the stand.

The application site is within the built-up area and is located outside of any Controlled Parking Zone which means that parking is unrestricted in the immediate environs of the ground.

Relevant Planning History

(Relevant to the northern side of the ground)

AWDM/1303/19: Permission granted for the *Enlargement of existing kiosk and proposed single-storey extension to provide store and kit room to north-east of football club grounds and repositioned turnstile and gate and new fence to part of north boundary.*

AWDM/0134/20: Permission granted for the *Removal of three x 21m high floodlight poles and all existing floodlights from all poles, (retention of existing telecommunication mast to south-west corner) and installation of eight x 15m high floodlight poles with LED lighting (two light fittings per column) (four to the south of site and four to the north of site).*

Elsewhere on the agenda, there is an application relating to the western side of the ground (AWDM/0351/24) - *Provision of a roof covering across the West end standing terrace. This will replace and enlarge a previous roof covering that had to be removed in March 2023 for safety reasons. The development will also include the provision of a roof covering across the North East section of the currently uncovered standing terrace. (Part retrospective application). Application to Vary Condition 1 of approved AWDM/1227/23 to amend the roof design and length of stand.*

The application is an amendment to a previous approval which has not been implemented in accordance with the approved plans.

Consultations

Southern Water

No objection subject to a condition

West Sussex Highways comments that,

'The proposal is for a new stand to be built on the north side of the pitch to replace the existing stand and increase spectator capacity. It is understood that this is a requirement of the Football governing body due to the club's promotion into a higher league.

The north stand currently accommodates 940 spectators which will increase to 1818 as a result of this proposal.
It is estimated that 70-75% of the match day attendees travel to the ground by public transport and a significant proportion live in the local area and walk to the ground. There are 2 local train stations within 1km walk of the ground and a number of bus routes with bus stops within 500 metres of the ground.

As detailed in the Transport Statement, it is likely that a large proportion of attendees will meet before a game as a social activity and to eat and drink and then walk to the game 'en masse'. However, this is expected behaviour and no details have been provided to support this. It is also anticipated that away fans, if travelling some distance, may choose to stay in the local area for the weekend and most likely walk to the ground. Away fans also commonly travel to the ground by coach.

Given the 70% predicted modal-split, it is estimated that – of the 760 home fans – 520 will travel to the ground by public transport/walking and 228 by car. There are no parking controls on the surrounding road network so those who chose to drive will find a space on the public highway on a first come first and given the additional vehicles some may have to park a considerable distance from the ground. It is agreed that over time, behaviours may change as a result of attendees deciding that it is easier to walk, however, this may take some time and lead to unsuitable parking in the meantime.

It is worth noting that the proposal will only impact the local road network on match days which will be no more than 23 per year. However, during these days, an additional 200 plus vehicles trying to find a parking place in local roads may result in localised congestion, unsafe parking and possible highway safety issues especially for pedestrians.

It is therefore recommended that the applicant provides an additional report detailing how the local highway network will be managed and policed on match days and a parking survey (taken on a match day) to determine existing capacity and possible limits of the network.'

Sport England

No objection

Council's Drainage Consultant

We have reviewed the application as the drainage consultant acting on behalf of the Council and wish to make the following comments.

The applicant is applying for the erection of new covered north stand 6 metres high reducing to 5.0 metres at the rear, 90 metres long by 6 metres deep, and the erection of new building in northwest corner, to provide WCs and Food & Beverage bar 2.69 metres high, 11.6 metres wide by 6.87 metres deep.

Following a review of the submitted information, we would recommend the approval of the application with the following conditions attached:

Condition 1: No phase of the development shall commence, other than works of site survey and investigation, until full details of the proposed surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Winter infiltration testing to BRE DG365, or similar approved, will be required to support the design of any infiltration drainage. Supporting calculations for the 100% AEP (1 in 1 year), 3.33% AEP (1 in 30 year), 3.33% AEP (1 in 30 year) plus climate change, 1% AEP (1 in 100 year), and the 1% AEP (1 in 100 year) plus climate

change critical storms will be required to support the viability of drainage scheme. No part of the building shall be occupied until the complete surface water drainage system serving the property has been implemented in accordance with the agreed details and the details so agreed shall be maintained in good working order in perpetuity.

Reason: To ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed and not increased in accordance with NPPF and Policies of Adur and Worthing Council.

Condition 2: The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until details of the maintenance and management of the sustainable drainage scheme have been submitted to and Matrix House Basing View Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 4FF Tel: +44 1256 318 800 wsp.com WSP UK Limited | Registered address: WSP House, 70 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1AF Registered in England and Wales No. 01383511 approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details in perpetuity. The Local Planning Authority shall be granted access to inspect the sustainable drainage scheme for the lifetime of the development. The details of the scheme to be submitted for approval shall include:

i. a timetable for its implementation.
ii. details of SuDS feature and connecting drainage structures and maintenance requirements for each aspect including a drawing showing where they are located.
iii. a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime. This will include the name and contact details of any appointed management company.

Reason: To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed for each new dwelling and not increased in accordance with NPPF and Policies of Adur and Worthing Council.

Environmental Health comments that,

There are no environmental health objections in principle. I would extend the noise management plan condition from previous permissions to cover this new development and would recommend a CMP condition for the construction period.

Representations

22 letters of objection have been received from local residents. Half of these objections are from residents in Bulkington Avenue, and others from addresses including St Elmo Road, Woodside Road and Shermanbury Road.

The objections are on the following grounds:

- adverse impact upon highway safety

- will worsen existing parking problems which already affects residents and access by emergency vehicles
- road infrastructure is already at breaking point
- overdevelopment of the site
- club has outgrown the site and needs to look for a new one
- loss of privacy through increased use of the stadium
- increased noise and disturbance which has already increased with more spectators
- the height of the trees already causes excessive shading
- the retaining wall to St Elmo Road is in need of repair
- the height of the stand will reduce light
- proximity of the food/wc block to neighbouring properties

3 letters of support have been received on the following grounds:

- success on the pitch has put the town on the map
- benefit to businesses nearby as a result of increased trade
- improve safety in the stadium and the matchday experience for fans
- playing at the next level of the football pyramid requires an increased capacity in the stadium

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Worthing Local Plan 2020-2036:
DM5 Quality of the Built Environment, DM7 Open Space, Recreation and Leisure, DM8 Planning for Sustainable Communities / Community Facilities, DM9 Delivering Infrastructure, DM12 The Visitor Economy, DM15 Sustainable Transport & Active Travel, DM16 Sustainable Design, DM18 Biodiversity, DM19 Green Infrastructure, DM20 Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage & DM22 Pollution

Supplementary Planning Document 'Sustainable Economy' (WBC 2012)
'Infrastructure Delivery Plan' (WBC 2010)

Relevant Legislation

The Committee should consider the planning application in accordance with:

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that the application may be granted either unconditionally or subject to relevant conditions, or refused. Regard shall be given to relevant development plan policies, any relevant local finance considerations, and other material considerations

Planning Assessment

It is considered that the main issues in the determination of the application are:

i) the principle of development
ii) highways safety and parking issues
iii) the effect of the proposals upon the amenities of neighbouring residential properties and,

iv) drainage.

Worthing Football Club has become increasingly successful in recent years and as the football season draws to a close may achieve promotion to the National League (one below the football league). If such a promotion is achieved, the club is required to improve its facilities to be able to play at National League level and hence the application has been submitted and needs to be determined in a timely manner to enable construction to take place between the football seasons i.e. during the summer. Even if promotion is not achieved this season, the Club has indicated that it wishes to improve the facilities and matchday experience in any case and the improvements will allow promotion should it be achieved in future seasons.

Your Officers are aware that, irrespective of the success of the football team itself, the use of the stadium has increased markedly on non match days since an all weather pitch was provided following a permission granted in 2014. This has led to a significant increase in community use of the site with it now being used by all ages from youths to seniors and is therefore in line with Local Plan policies. In recent years, the attendances for the matches have also increased from numbers typically in the hundreds to the current situation where attendances in four figures are normal.

Policies DM7 to DM9 of the Local Plan encourage the improvement of sporting, community and infrastructure facilities. The success of the team, with one match recently being broadcast on national television, can only be of benefit to the town and therefore also accords with the need to promote economic development in the town. The principle of development, therefore, is considered to be quite clearly acceptable.

As is the case with other policies of the Local Plan, though, this is subject to there being no adverse impact upon the character of the area or neighbouring properties and this is an important consideration in the determination of the application.

A number of objections have raised concern regarding highway safety and parking issues in the area. It seems readily apparent that any problems have increased as attendance at the ground has increased.

While located close to the railway station and walkable from the town centre, the site is outside of the Controlled Parking Zone and therefore parking is unrestricted in area. Your Officers have visited the site on a number of occasions outside of match days and note that there is already parking pressure in the area, the eastern end of Bulkington Avenue being one example. This is not an uncommon situation in roads closest to the town centre that are outside any controlled zone. Furthermore, there is also a notable lack of yellow lines in locations where otherwise they may be expected eg at the junction of Bulkington Avenue and Gaisford Road meaning that vehicles can park (both on match days and non match days) far closer to the junction than ideal.

Members will be aware that paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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.’*

While it is acknowledged that highways pressure upon the area increases significantly on a matchday (the Highways response from the County Council indicates that additional 200 plus vehicles would be looking for a parking space) the bar for refusing an application on such grounds is quite high and certainly it is arguable that any issues within the area cannot be attributed solely to the use of the football ground, especially when match days take place less than 30 times per football season. Given the location of the ground so close to alternative modes of transport, your Officers feel it would be difficult to demonstrate the impact of the development would be so severe that it could justifiably be refused under the guidance contained within the NPPF

The County Council has suggested that the applicant *provides an additional report detailing how the local highway network will be managed and policed on match days and a parking survey (taken on a match day) to determine existing capacity and possible limits of the network.* The applicant's agent has queried this part of the response and states that the Club already has Wardens monitoring parking situations on match days and responding to any complaints, and it also states that it is not within the remit of the Club to be able to 'police' the situation given they are not the responsible body for any enforcement required as a result. WSCC Highways has been asked to clarify its position and Members will be updated at the meeting.

As there is only one confirmed home match to play (after the Committee meeting) plus any that may occur subsequently in the post season play-offs (which would be at very short notice), there is no ability to arrange a parking survey by the time of the determination of the application. Nonetheless, it would seem appropriate to impose a condition requiring a parking survey to be undertaken should permission be granted which may then inform a further debate as to the necessity or otherwise to introduce any temporary parking restrictions in the area on a matchday. This is a common practice for larger stadiums albeit the net result is that it pushes parking issues further away from the stadium. It is suggested that this survey not only include examples of illegal parking but also legitimate parking, given the current lack of parking restrictions, which may be causing highway safety problems in the area.

It should be borne in mind that irrespective of the current outcome of the application, attendance and use of the ground is likely to remain at the current level and therefore imposing a condition upon the development may represent the best opportunity to secure an improvement from the current situation which is clearly causing a concern to local residents.

The next issue is the impact of the new stand and food/toilet block upon the amenities of neighbouring properties.

The main properties affected are those in Bulkington Avenue and many of the affected residents have raised concerns regarding the application. At present, the properties are screened from the site of the proposed stand by a consistent cypress screen. It has been confirmed by the Arboricultural Officer that the height of these trees exceed the 6 metre height of the stand (they are between 7 and 8 metres). He has similarly confirmed, verbally (following a site visit) at the time of writing this report, that the conclusions of the Arboricultural Report are acceptable and that the stand can be constructed without detriment to the trees. In this respect, therefore, your Officers consider that the stand will be adequately screened from existing properties to the extent that a refusal on the grounds of loss of light/amenity could not be justified. The

gardens serving these properties are of a reasonable length, around 14 metres where properties have not extended to the rear).

The trees are not preserved, and their species and location within a football ground means it is unlikely they would meet the criteria for a Tree Preservation Order. As such, therefore, the Council has no control over the possible removal of the trees (not that there is any suggestion that the Club wishes to remove them) but, more relevantly, also no control over the management and future husbandry of the trees. Your Officers note that some residents consider that the trees are too high and are causing too much shade to the south facing gardens of the Burlington Avenue properties. From your Officer's site visit, there is some sympathy with this view, and it follows that if a solid structure is to be introduced along the northern side of the football ground, albeit at a distance from residential properties that is considered acceptable, then in turn it would be quite reasonable to ensure that the trees are managed in future to an agreed level, say no more than 1 metre above the height of the stand. This would then allow greater sunlight to reach the gardens of the properties affected and this would help to offset the impact of the stand. A condition can be imposed to this effect.

The issues relating to the food and toilet block are slightly different as the run of the cypress trees ends before the north western corner of the ground where the block is proposed and the very end tree needs to be removed as part of the proposal. Numbers 67 and 69 Bulkington Avenue are both affected by the proposal.

Having viewed the application site from both of these properties, your Officers expressed some concern to the applicant's agent regarding the fact that the block, albeit quite limited in height at 2.6 metres, was to be proposed tight against the boundary of the site. The applicant's agent has responded that it would be possible to reduce the size of the block by 0.7 metres to allow some hedging to be planted in between that part of the block and number 67.

Your Officers feel this is an acceptable compromise as number 67 loses the existing screening of the tree to be removed, which will mean a floodlight pole is no longer screened from the property. Some form of hedging will prevent the ability for any spectators to linger near the block and overlook the garden of the property. Number 69 is already open to view from the football ground as there are no trees on the football ground side bordering the boundary of the property at present, but there is some screening within the neighbour's own garden. A building of 2.6 metres in height in itself is not considered to have an unacceptable impact given it would be over 10 metres from the extended rear part of this property. While concern has been expressed that supporters would linger in this part of the ground, there appears to be a limited space to do so. In light of the closer proximity to residential properties than the equivalent block in the north eastern corner, as well as other facilities within the wider ground, it would also seem reasonable to impose a condition ensuring that the block is only used on a first team matchday. While the proposal is exempt from biodiversity net gain requirements, any opportunity to provide landscaping (albeit on an enclosed football ground) should be taken and therefore will be a secondary benefit of the amendment.

The Design and Access Statement refers to a Noise Management Plan relating to the west stand. The Environmental Health Officer has requested that the Management Plan condition is reimposed on this application. Given the greater length and capacity

of this stand, it is felt that the Noise Management Plan should be reviewed and updated as necessary. This can be controlled by condition.

With regard to drainage, the Council's consultant initially indicated that winter infiltration testing would be necessary to comply with the suggested condition. To wait until winter for such testing is incompatible with the proposed timescale for the development. As a result, therefore, a consulting engineer has undertaken a further test and deepened a proposed soakaway accordingly. The results of this exercise appear to demonstrate that a pre commencement condition is not necessary in this instance but the information has been sent to the Council's drainage consultant and any further update will be provided at the meeting.

In conclusion, the progress of the Football Club both on and off the pitch is something to be admired and is improving the sporting reputation of the town. The desire of the football club to improve its facilities is similarly to be applauded. It has to be borne in mind, though, that the football ground is very close to residential properties and accordingly the development can only be considered acceptable if the mitigation outlined in the report can be achieved. It is considered that the use of planning conditions can acceptably mitigate the impacts of the scheme, as set out in national policy, and accordingly it is recommended that permission be granted subject to the further comments of the Highway Authority.

Recommendation

It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the satisfactory comments of the Highway Authority and subject to the following planning conditions:-

1. Approved Plans

2. The development shall proceed in accordance with the proposed means of foul sewerage and surface water disposal submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water.

3. The development shall proceed in accordance with the proposed surface water drainage scheme that has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority. No part of the building shall be occupied until the complete surface water drainage system serving the property has been implemented in accordance with the agreed details and the details so agreed shall be maintained in good working order in perpetuity.

   Reason: *To ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed and not increased in accordance with NPPF and Policies of Adur and Worthing Council.*

4. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until details of the maintenance and management of the sustainable drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details in perpetuity. The Local Planning Authority shall be granted access to inspect the sustainable drainage scheme for the

lifetime of the development. The details of the scheme to be submitted for approval shall include:

i. a timetable for its implementation.
ii. details of SuDS feature and connecting drainage structures and maintenance requirements for each aspect including a drawing showing where they are located.
iii. a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime. This will include the name and contact details of any appointed management company.

Reason: *To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and ensure the flood risk is adequately addressed for each new dwelling and not increased in accordance with NPPF and Policies of Adur and Worthing Council.*

5. Prior to the commencement of the 2024/25 football season, an updated noise management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

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6. Parking survey to be undertaken within two months of the commencement of the 2024/25 season in accordance with details first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

7. Trees on the northern side to be maintained, and not exceed, a height to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

8. Materials in accordance with approved plans.

9. NW block to be used on a first team matchday only.

10. Details of additional landscaping to be provided prior to first use of the NW block.