

PLANNING STATEMENT

Stanborough Park North,
Welwyn Garden City, Herts

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
March 2019

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared and submitted by Roebuck Land and Planning Ltd on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in support of a full planning application for the removal of the existing children's playground and the construction of a replacement playground including splashpad; outdoor gym equipment; kiosk and changing rooms, landscaping and groundworks at Stanborough Park North, Welwyn Garden City ("the Site").

Background

- 1.2 The application site is located within Stanborough Park North, located on Stanborough Road, Welwyn. The Site is owned by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and comprises the former lido site, which currently includes a kiosk and toilet facility, parkland and children's playground.
- 1.3 The application area is 10,864sqm/1.086 hectares.
- 1.4 The surrounding area is predominantly grass parkland with associated car parking with a high ropes course further east and the River Lea with boating lake beyond further south. Public Right of Way Welwyn Garden City 004 runs along the north side of the car park connecting Stanborough Road to Lemsford Lane. It is not affected by this proposal.
- 1.5 Whilst not a designated PROW, there is also a public pathway along the front of the building linking the car park to the high ropes course. This route is also unaffected however the proposals include provision for repairing/resurfacing the path where required.

Purpose

- 1.6 The primary purpose of this statement is to assess the proposed development against the Development Plan and material considerations.

Supporting documents

- 1.7 The application is accompanied by the following environmental, technical and design documents and drawings, which should be read in conjunction with this planning statement:

Table 1: List of supporting documents

	TITLE	DOCUMENT/DRAWING/REV NO.	AUTHOR
1	Application Form	March 2019	Roebuck
2	Site Location Plan	TM386L04 Site Location Plan	Turkington Martin
3a	Topographical - Original	S19-029D1	Turkington Martin
3b	Topographical - Original	TS19-029D2	Turkington Martin
4	Proposed Site Plan/Masterplan	TM386L01	Turkington Martin
5	Illustrative sections	TM386LS01	Turkington Martin
6	Materials General Arrangement	TM386L02	Turkington Martin
7	Planting General Arrangement	TM386L03	Turkington Martin
8	Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan	TM386R04	Turkington Martin
9	Proposed Elevations	M9671_ASK010	Hunters
10	Proposed Elevations - kiosk and changing facility	M9671_ASK013	Hunters
11	Proposed Floor Plan	M9671_ASK012	Hunters
12	Design and Access Statement	TM386R03	Turkington Martin
13	Ground Report	May 2010	WYG
14	Extended Phase 1 Habitat Assessment	March 2019	Tim Moya Associates
15	Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy	Version 1.3 dated 29 March 2019	Conisbee
16	Proposed Site Levels and Contours	171116-CON-X-XX-DR-C-2000 rev P6	Conisbee
17	Earthworks Cross sections	171116-CON-X-XX-DR-C-2100 Rev P4	Conisbee
18	Earthworks analysis	171116-CON-X-XX-DR-C-7003 rev P2	Conisbee
19	Drainage Strategy	171116-CON-X-00-DR-C-1000 Rev P4	Conisbee
20.	Arboricultural Assessment	March 2019	Adonis
21.	Planning Statement	March 2019	Roebuck

2.0 The Proposed Development

2.1 The description of the proposed development is for:

“Removal of existing children’s playground and reinstatement of ground as parkland; construction of new playground including splashpad with associated changing rooms; kiosk; fencing around storage compound; outdoor gym equipment; drainage, earthworks and landscaping”

2.2 The details of the scheme design are set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement including the individual items of equipment. The facilities have been designed to cater for a range of ages from toddler through to teenager and adults. There will be no charge for using the wet and dry play facilities and outdoor gym equipment. The area will be open all year round during the daytime albeit the splashpad is likely to be a more seasonal facility with most of the use expected to occur from Easter to September. There may be low level use during other times, such as school holidays, periods of good weather.

2.3 The underground tanks for the splashpad are to be located within the former lido swimming pool chamber that remains underground. The filtration plant is to be located within the adjacent compound area of the existing toilet block/kiosk. It is necessary to fence off the splashpad and children’s play areas to provide a secure area within which to play and to separate the play area from other park users, dogs etc. A 1.1m high railing is proposed. Level access is provided to/from the play areas.

2.4 All the areas of equipped play including the outdoor gym equipment will have the requisite safety surfacing underneath. The colour scheme has been considered in liaison with the planning officer to establish a natural muted colour palette that complements the nautical theme of the play area whilst respecting its parkland and green belt location.

2.5 The removal of the existing playground and its return to parkland improves the river corridor at this point, facilitating the use of sustainable drainage systems for the scheme. The low nutrient soil offers an opportunity for wildflower meadow to be created and formal/informal seating areas.

2.6 The overall drainage strategy has been derived to create a natural flow of surface water back to the river lea, in consultation with the Environment Agency. The necessary changes to landform to create the desired run off levels and flood compensation have created an opportunity to create some informal seating through the formation of earth mounds around the play areas.

2.7 The existing pathway to the high ropes facility will be maintained/repared as part of the scheme delivery. This path has been integrated into the arrival and seating areas to deliver a cohesive scheme.

2.8 The toilet block is being refurbished both internally and external improvements are being considered under a separate application 6/2019/119 that is under consideration by the Council. The proposed kiosk and changing facility comprise 14.4sqm each, totalling 28.8sqm of additional

floorspace. The units are designed to complement this scheme using similar external materials, linked to the existing building by a complementary fence.

- 2.9 The fence height is set at 2.6 metres to meet the minimum requirement of 2.4m high security fencing around the UKPN plant to the car park boundary and to screen the new plant for the splashpad. The opportunity has been taken to create a compound of a sufficient size to reposition the existing euro bins that are currently bordering the existing children's play area.
- 2.10 There is no requirement for external lighting beyond the existing levels. There is already a CCTV system in situ.
- 2.11 This scheme does not require any tree removal and the root protection areas of existing trees have been considered through the detailed scheme design.
- 2.12 To complement this scheme, 6 cycle parking spaces are proposed close to the existing carpark edge to provide an alternative facility to the cycle parking at the south side of the park. Whilst it is still expected that visitors to the park will use the dedicated cycle routes to/from the park, additional cycle parking spaces will offer an alternative option in a location that is naturally surveilled.

Pre-application advice and public consultation

- 2.13 The Applicant has held discussions with the local planning authority, local highway authority, local lead flood officer, Herts Constabulary and the environment agency. The responses received have shaped the design proposals.
- 2.14 Public consultation has been undertaken prior to this application being finalised and submitted. A manned exhibition took place on 1st and 2nd March to obtain public views on the initial proposals. As a result of feedback given to the applicant, the following changes have been made to the scheme:

Provision of a changing facility for the splashpad users

Inclusion of several 'sails' to create shade in across parts of the play areas

Increased number of swings

Repositioning of the toddler play equipment

Incorporation of a musical play item

Addition of a surprise basket goal to one end of the informal grass play area

3.0 Planning Context and History

3.1 The site lies partially between Flood Zone Level 2 and 3a and is within the Green Belt. It is within an area of archaeological importance. There are no other environmental designations on the site.

3.2 The relevant planning history for the site includes:

- S/2019/0119/FULL: Alterations to toilet block. Live application.

This planning applications forms a first phase of the redevelopment works for the park. Planning permission is sought for the re-cladding and other minor alterations to the existing toilet block and kiosk.

- N6/2010/3120/DC3: Redevelopment of Former Splashlands complex to include: Phase 1 Construction of High Ropes Adventure Course, supporting ticket kiosk and clearance of former Lido area and: Phase 2: Redevelopment of former Lido site to provide a wet play area, extension and refurbishment of existing toilet block to provide café, education room, ticket office, landscaping and associated car park access and highway improvements. Approved 05/03/2013.

This planning permission has been partially implemented and remains live. The Phase 1 works have been completed and the site has been cleared. The high ropes course and associated facilities has been constructed and is operational.

- N6/2006/0757/FP: Installation of pay and display payment machines, lighting, CCTV and signage. Approved 03/08/2006.
- 4143/71: Refreshment kiosk: Approved 11/1/72.
- 150/63: Extension to swimming pool: Approved 20/3/1963.
- 2343/67: Site for Recreation grounds. Approved 8/4/1968.
- 1397/49: Filter House of Lea Valley Swimming Pool. Approved 15/11/1949.

Historic use

3.3 The site was the location for the Lea Valley Lido, an open air swimming pool developed in the 1930s as one of three in the area. The 'Lido on the Lea' opened in 1935 and measured 100ft by 40ft with a depth of between 3 to 6 ft at its deepest. It had a concrete terrace around with a diving platform and changing facilities in the form of wooden huts. The water supply was provided by a tributary of the River Lea.

3.4 In the 1960s the pool was enlarged and rebuilt in concrete with various ancillary buildings including changing rooms and the public toilet block. The facilities extended to learner pools, areas of sand, a water fountain and paddling areas.

- 3.5 By 1970, the facility had been updated again to a lake-land park with additional structures and facilities. Following various groundwater drainage issues and maintenance costs, the site was closed in the 1990's.

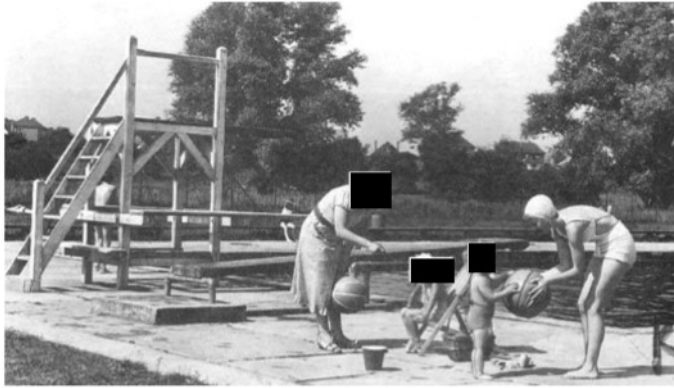


Fig 1: Lido in the 1930s (Source: Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service)

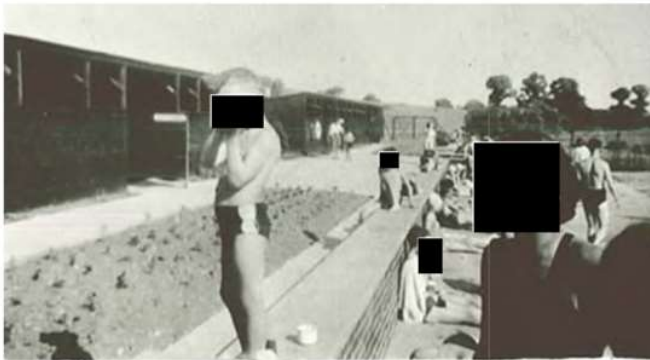


Fig 2: Lido in the 1950-60s (Source: Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service)



Fig 3: Lido in the 1970s (Source: www.welwynhatfield.co.uk)

- 3.6 The former lido, surrounding pavements, kiosk, changing rooms, slides were subsequently demolished. From the historical plans and records, we understand that the lido site extended to circa 0.55 hectares with a total 1,613sqm floorspace of ancillary buildings and structures on the site.

2013 Planning permission

- 3.7 The 2013 planning permission for the site covered an area of 3.85 hectares comprising the former lido site, the existing car park and playground. The first phase of the permission has been implemented. permission was in two phases. This comprised the construction of the high ropes course and clearance of the remaining structures within the lido site and its reinstatement as level ground and parkland.
- 3.8 The second consented phase included a wet play area, an extension to toilet block to include a ticket office, café, teaching rooms, car park improvements and access improvements to the Stanborough Road junction. The approved floorspace comprises a 445sqm pavilion (including existing toilet block) of which 360sqm was additional floorspace plus 15 changing rooms across 50sqm. Extracts of the approved masterplan and pavilion footprint are reproduced below for context.

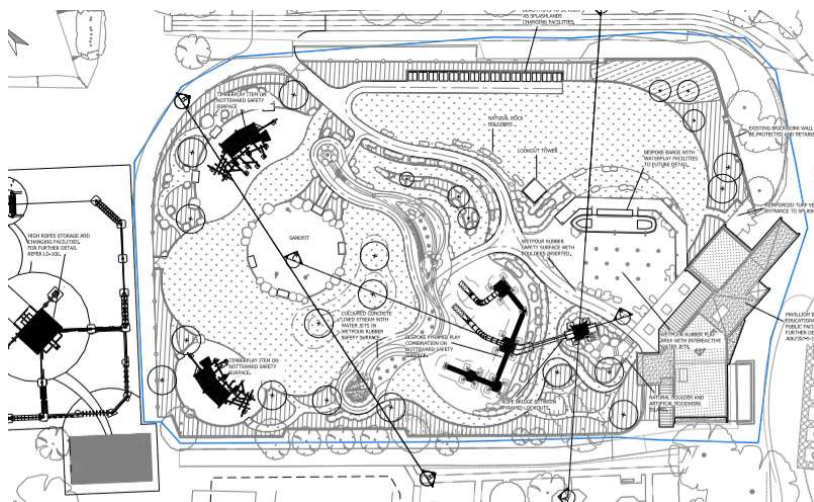


Fig 4: Masterplan extract of consented play scheme.

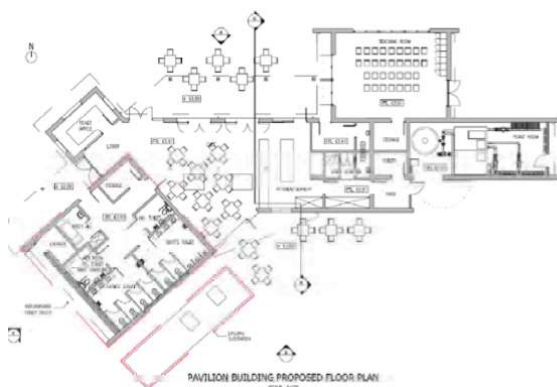


Fig 5: Approved extension to toilet block to create pavilion

- 3.9 This scheme is material consideration in the assessment of Green Belts impacts of the proposed development that is the subject of this application.

4.0 Policy assessment and other material considerations

- 4.1 Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) refers to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through decision taking. For decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.
- 4.2 In deciding planning applications, 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.
- 4.3 For decision-making, the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 is the relevant development plan.
- 4.4 The local plan review is underway and is currently at examination. A further call for sites exercise was undertaken in January 2019 and further Green belt work was undertaken and the Green Belt Study Stage 3 was published on 20th March 2019. This report continues to conclude that the site is within a 'most essential green belt area'.

Principle of Development

- 4.5 The application site is located on land that is designated as Green Belt where the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) is applicable. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Three exceptions to this include;

- the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in it;
- the extension or alterations of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building; and
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites, whether redundant or in continuing use which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it than the existing development.

- 4.6 The proposed development would provide appropriate outdoor recreational facilities on land which has previously been developed. The extant 2013 consented scheme is a material consideration in this application as the site already benefits from planning permission for a variety of structures on a larger scale than is proposed within this application.

- 4.7 The previous Phase 1 high ropes course provides a backdrop for the scheme and is a compatible use. In considering the impact upon the greenbelt, the former phase 2 scheme was deemed to be appropriate (refer to Figs 4 and 5 above). Set against this consented scheme, the proposed development is less intensive and requires significantly less built form to be constructed on site. The consented scheme includes multiple structures up to 9metres in height across a larger footprint. The maximum height in this application is the pirate ship at 8.9 m. All other equipment and sails are under 3.5m in height. It would not conflict with paragraph 133 of the NPPF. The openness of the Green Belt is preserved through the character of the proposal being predominantly open structures of a scale that is wholly appropriate for a play park. Combined with the removal of the former playground area and the older play equipment and its return to parkland, there is in effect a neutral impact upon the openness of the area. The proposed recreational uses are within the permissible exceptions to building in a green belt.
- 4.8 The ancillary structures that are necessary to house the plant and filtration equipment for the splashpad and associated changing facilities have been designed to link into the existing kiosk/toilet block compound. The existing storage container that houses the seasonal kiosk will be removed from the park and the activity/use will be rationalised into the replacement kiosk sited within the compound area.
- 4.9 Overall, the impact is significantly less than was previously considered acceptable within a green belt. Replacing the existing compound fencing with a more substantial fence that is fully integrated into the existing toilet block facility, proposed kiosk and changing room area will create a more coherent character. This compound also provides an area to relocate the existing eurobins that are currently stored along the edge of the car park/park. Consolidating these uses into one location improves the general openness of the green belt. These additions are wholly proportionate to the existing toilet block and to the function they perform. The NPPF also guides that extensions/additions can be acceptable where they are not disproportionate.
- 4.10 It is worth noting that the former Lido included a significant bank of changing rooms at circa 970sqm and a total overall floorspace of 1,613 sqm. Whilst it has since been demolished and its impacts are no longer visible, the replacement pavilion that benefits from the extant 2013 planning permission was approved at 445sqm plus 50sqm of changing rooms. By comparison, this scheme proposes 14.4sqm of floorspace across both the kiosk and the changing rooms, demonstrating a significantly smaller scale of built form and lesser impact upon the openness of the green belt.
- 4.11 The finished work would comprise raised earthworks, top soiling and seeding to grassland, which would not conflict with the NPPF. Such areas provide interest and informal seating opportunities. Overall, there is no departure from Green Belt policy.
- 4.12 It then necessary to consider the impact of specific development proposals on the five green belt purposes. Tested against these criteria, namely a (check unrestricted sprawl); b (prevent coalescence of towns); c (encroachment); d (preserve setting of historic towns); and e (recycling derelict/urban land), there is no conflict arising.
- 4.13 The adopted Local Plan Policy CLT3 'Stanborough Park' is relevant to this proposal. This policy states that it will support proposals for the redevelopment of the Splashlands Complex for new leisure facilities provided:
- i. The external changes have no greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt;

- ii. No new buildings are proposed – external alterations only;
- iii. There is no change in the footprint of the existing building.

- 4.14 Tested against the historic uses of the site, the proposals have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including this land within it than the development which existed on the site at the time of the closure and the proposals do not occupy a greater footprint or exceed the height of the existing buildings which existed on the site at the time of the closure of the swimming complex. Therefore, there is no policy conflict and the principle of the development is acceptable.
- 4.15 It is noteworthy that this policy has not been carried forward to the new Local Plan that is being prepared. However emerging policy SADM 34 deals with development in the Green Belt which continues to safeguard the five purposes of Green Belt.
- 4.16 Policy RA10 requires development to contribute to maintaining and enhancing the local landscape character area, in this case the Middle Lea Valley West Landscape Character Area. The proposed changes would be acceptable in their own right, being a compatible recreational use within a parkland setting. Further, they represent a reduction in built form and scale to the already acceptable fallback position of the 2013 planning permission, to the benefit of the wider landscape.
- 4.17 In addition to the above, Policy RA21 of the District Plan is applicable which refers to Leisure and Tourism in the Countryside. This policy allows proposals for recreational development subject to the; i. The proposed use is in accordance with Green Belt policies; ii. The proposed uses would not have an adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties, nor the character and other environmental assets of the countryside; iii. The proposal would be accessible by means of passenger transport, cycleway, footpaths and bridleway; iv. Existing buildings are re-used if possible; v. New buildings that are permitted in accordance with (i) should reflect the local rural character in terms of design, massing and materials; and vi. Any new development must be acceptable in terms of its impact on the highway network, including highway safety.
- 4.18 In this instance, as outlined above the proposed development is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and complies with criteria (i). With regard to the remaining criteria of this policy these are assessed in the sections below.

Flooding

- 4.19 The site lies partially between Flood Zone Level 2 and 3a but the majority of the scheme would be a water compatible use. A Flood Risk Assessment accompanies the application. It concludes that the scheme can be accommodated on the site. A full drainage strategy including the creation of swales has been worked up by Conisbee to mitigate the development impacts.

Access, cycle parking and servicing

- 4.20 The existing path access to the new play area is to be used/upgraded to create a larger hardstanding and seating area connecting the new play areas to the toilet facility, car park and seating areas.

- 4.21 6 cycle hoops are proposed to cater for persons wishing to park at this north side of the park. The eurobins will continue to be collected via the park access road. The compound has direct access onto the car park/collection area to maintain the status quo. Any service vehicles for the splashpad will use the existing access road and car park. The established emergency vehicle access is unaffected by the proposals.
- 4.22 A transport assessment is being carried out to review the pedestrian and cycle access to the park and will be submitted when available. This includes an assessment of the potential users of the facility who may travel by car. This is set in context that the splashpad is a new wet play facility, and is expected to generate linked trips with the other elements. Those other elements are not new and the facilities already exist on the park but the proposals seek to upgrade them – i.e. the kiosk, play equipment and seating areas.
- 4.23 The earthworks proposed as part of this application to create the necessary drainage and flood compensation areas are formed using material from the site. It is not expected that any soil will need to be imported/exported from site to deliver this scheme.
- 4.24 The car park is being resurfaced under the Councils maintenance scheme and the proposed scheme does not require any additional or alternative provision.

Siting, Design and External Appearance

- 4.25 The drawings prepared by Turkington martin demonstrate the detailed site layout and external finishes for the scheme. The data sheets for each item of the play equipment is included within the Design and Access Statement for consideration. The general theme is a natural timber finish complemented by muted colours and stainless-steel items.
- 4.26 The floorplans and elevations prepared by Hunters show the proposed treatment of the kiosk and changing rooms. The cladding material is the same as proposed for the toilet block refurbishment that is under consideration (application reference 6/2019/1119) to tie the built form together. These structures will be linked by timber cladding in a complementary colour.
- 4.27 Site levels are shown on the drawings prepared by Conisbee and include the reprofiled areas of the site following the formation of the SUDs and flood compensation areas. A section of retaining wall will be required within the area of the existing playground. This will be treated with timber. A cross section is included within the Design and Access Statement.

Hard and Soft Landscaping and Trees

- 4.28 An arboricultural assessment has been undertaken by Adonis. The proposed development does not require the removal of any trees. Where proposed works encroach into the root protection zones, a no dig methodology is to be adopted. The proposed groundworks in the vicinity of the trees will comprise permeable paving as part of the drainage strategy for the site.
- 4.29 A planting strategy accompanies the application along with a landscape management and maintenance plan prepared by Turkington Martin. This deals with both the proposed development area and the reinstatement of the existing playground to parkland and wildflower areas.

Drainage

- 4.30 The accompanying drainage strategy drawings by Conisbee set out the layout, design and specification of the surface water drainage scheme proposed. This has been designed at 100-year flood event plus 40% climate change.
- 4.31 Foul drainage is not relevant to this proposal as this application does not propose any change to the existing toilet block. External changes to this building are being considered under a separate application.

Ground Conditions

- 4.32 The application includes a Phase 1 assessment undertaken by WYG for the previous scheme. Whilst a Phase 2 assessment was carried out by RPS previously (Planning permission N6/2010/3120/DC3 refers), an updated SI is being undertaken at the current time. The results will be submitted when available or in the alternative, this could be conditioned as part of any planning approval.

Archaeological and heritage impacts

- 4.33 There are no heritage assets on or adjacent to the site. The site was previously developed and an extract from the historic buildings/walls footprint is reproduced below:

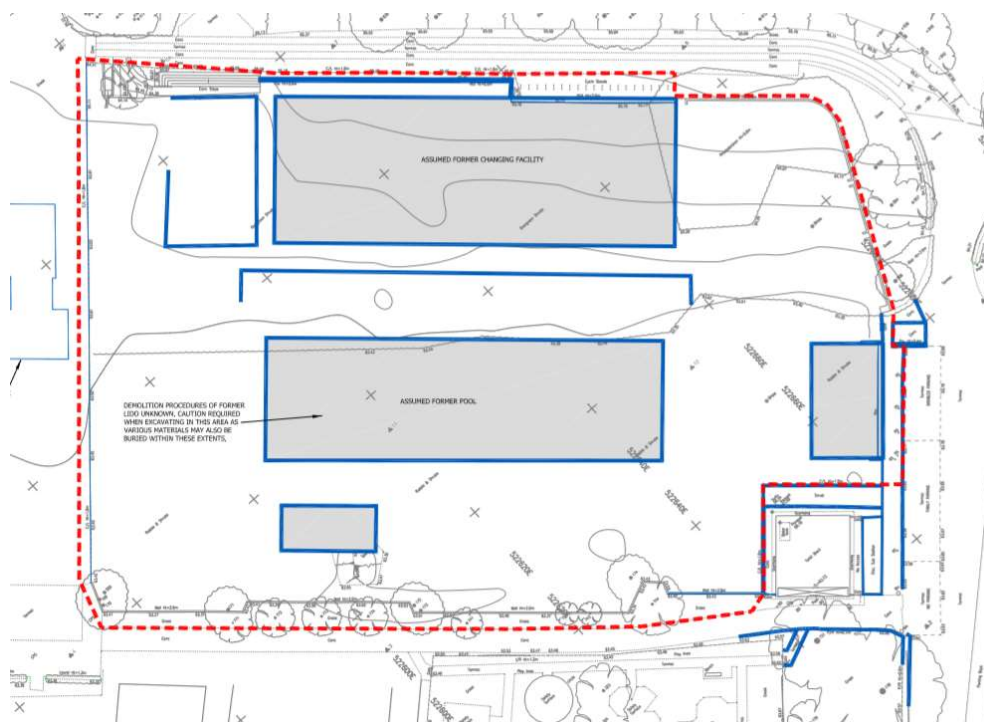


Fig 6: Source: Planning Permission 2010/3120 WYG drawing A067207-5-51-C-1010

- 4.34 The proposed development falls within the former lido area which was previously developed land. The archaeological and heritage impacts will remain the same as assessed previously and

agreed as being unlikely to have an impact on significant archaeological deposits, structures or features.

Ecology

- 4.35 A phase 1 extended habitat survey has been carried out by TMA. This concludes that there are no ecological constraints to the development. The two buildings that have potential for bat roosts within the red line application site (storage unit -B4 and toilet block/kiosk – B5) are unaffected by this proposal. There are no alterations proposed to these buildings in this application.

Residential Amenity

- 4.36 The 2013 scheme considered the noise impacts of that development and it was concluded that there were no noise-related constraints to development of recreational/leisure uses on this site. no impacts are likely to exist. Aside from this scheme being less intensive and smaller in scale, the proposals are recreational activities within an established parkland. The uses are generally associated with day-time use. No new lighting is proposed, and it is not therefore expected to generate any undue noise or disturbance to the surrounding community.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared and submitted by Roebuck land and Planning Ltd on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield Council in support of an application for the removal of the existing playground and the construction of a new play area including splashpad, outdoor gym equipment, replacement kiosk and ancillary facilities including changing rooms and seating areas, drainage and landscaping at Stanborough Park North.
- 5.2 The principle of a recreational use has been established on the site through the extant planning permission for a larger more intensive facility in 2013. The site is previously developed being the former lido swimming pool site that was demolished, and the site subsequently cleared and levelled as part of the 2013 consent. Thus, the provision of alternative play facilities and associated facilities in this green belt location has been accepted in principle.
- 5.3 This scheme proposes a more focused scheme that seeks to replace the existing playground with a new play area including a splashpad and associated facilities. The facility is intended to serve the town and surrounding community and is proportionate in scale to the site and the parkland setting.
- 5.4 The detailed plans and visuals are accompanied by a raft of technical documents to demonstrate that the proposed development can be located on the site without harm to the wider park and specifically, the river lea. The scheme has been designed to respect its green belt location and its openness. It is an appropriate form of development in a green belt and the scheme accords with the policies contained in the adopted and emerging development plan.
- 5.5 The Council is therefore respectfully requested to approve the full planning application without delay.

