

**Application Ref:** 20/01707/R4FUL

**Proposal:** Proposed air dome covered pitch and supporting facilities building for the Peterborough United Football Club Training Academy, associated formalisation of existing parking through hard surfacing

**Site:** Nene Park Academy, Oundle Road, Orton Longueville, Peterborough

**Applicant:** Mr Kieran Scarff, Peterborough United Football Club  
**Agent:** Mr Paul Ingle, Portess and Richardson

**Site visit:** 02.02.2021

**Referred by:** Head of Planning Services  
**Reason:** Wider interest and to ensure open and transparent decision-making

**Case officer:** Mrs Louise Simmonds  
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**Recommendation:** REFUSE

**1 Description of the site and surroundings and Summary of the proposal**

**Site and Surroundings**

The application site forms part of the wider site currently occupied by the Nene Park Academy secondary school and Peterborough United Football Club (PUFC) Academy, situated on land to the south of Oundle Road. The site comprises an informally laid out gravel car park used by the PUFC Academy, an area of amenity grassland, and the site formerly occupied by the Lakeside building (used for ancillary functions associated with the secondary school but long-since derelict and vacant) which was recently demolished.

The site is accessed from Oundle Road via a signalised access which is shared by the PUFC Academy, secondary school and St Botolph's Primary School situated to the north-east.

Oundle Road runs east-west to the north of the site, with Ferry Meadows country park beyond to the north. Residential properties in Longfield Gate are located along the north-western boundary of the site. To the east, the site abuts an area of woodland with Orton Hall Hotel (a Grade II Listed Building) and the Orton Longueville Conservation Area beyond. To the south are the existing PUFC Academy buildings, with a floodlit all-weather pitch with spectator stands and grass pitches beyond. The Nene Park Academy building and its landscaped grounds form the western/south-western boundary.

The PUFC Academy is long-established and is an education use in itself, falling within Use Class F.1 (local community and learning) albeit there are a number of associated sport facilities including the grass pitches and all-weather pitch with spectator stands.

**Proposal**

The application seeks planning permission for the construction of an air dome covered football pitch with associated two storey accommodation/facilities building. In addition, formalisation of existing gravel parking through hard surfacing is proposed alongside some land re-profiling and soft landscaping.

The air dome would be of dimensions: 63 metres (length) x 45 metres (width) x 11.24 metres

(maximum height). It would be finished largely in white polyester fabric membrane, albeit the north-western and north-eastern elevations would have the lower 3 metres finished in graduating green (from dark to light). The dome would contain a full-size third generation all-weather football pitch with floodlighting.

The accommodation block building would comprise changing rooms and an office space at ground floor, with classrooms, meeting rooms and a parent/guest lounge at first floor. The building would be of dimensions: 38.8m (length) x 10m (width) x 6.87m (height). It is proposed to be of regular rectangular form, with a flat roof and would be sited to the west of the air dome.

The proposed car par would be positioned to the west of the accommodation building whilst the soft landscaping would be to the north of the air dome, to create a treed screen to the structure.

It should be noted that the proposal originally included the demolition of a building on the site known as the Lakeside building. This however has already been demolished through the exercising of permitted development rights and has therefore been removed from this application.

## **2 Relevant Planning History**

Please note that the following is not the complete planning history of the application site.

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Date</b>
21/00530/PRIOR	Demolition of "Lakeside Building"	Prior Approval Permitted	27/05/2021
19/01843/FUL	Installation of two spectator stands (revised design) adjacent to existing football pitches	Permitted	21/02/2020
19/01292/FUL	Installation of two spectator stands adjacent to existing football pitches	Permitted	07/11/2019
17/00521/R3FUL	Proposed construction of three storey school building to east of Brunel Building with glazed link to existing buildings pursuant to the demolition of existing single storey building, proposed single storey extension to south west elevation of Sports Hall building, proposed new drop-off area at northern entrance and relocation of cycle store to accommodate 300 additional pupils	Permitted	16/06/2017
14/02021/R4FUL	Construction of all-weather training facility, fencing and lighting	Permitted	12/11/2015
11/01287/R3FUL	Construction of replacement school building (Nene Park Academy) and refurbishment of retained buildings with associated external works including car parking; New pre school building with associated external works. Demolition of other existing buildings and associated external works to reinstate land including the creation of grass sports pitches	Permitted	13/10/2011

## **3 Planning Policy**

Decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan policies below, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

### **Section 66 - General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions**

The Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to 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.

### **Section 72 - General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.**

The Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)**

Paragraph 38 - Decision-making

Chapter 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities

Paragraph 92 - Social, recreational and cultural facilities

Paragraph 94 - School development

Paragraph 97 - Existing open space, sport and recreation

Chapter 9 - Promoting sustainable transport

Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places

Chapter 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

### **Peterborough Local Plan 2016 to 2036 (2019)**

LP7: Health and Wellbeing

LP13: Transport

LP16: Design and the Public Realm

LP17: Amenity Provision

LP19: The Historic Environment

LP22: Green Infrastructure Network

LP23: Local Green Space, Protected Green Space and Existing Open Spaces

LP28: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

LP29: Trees and Woodland

LP32: Flood and Water Management

### **Peterborough Flood and Water Management SPD (2019)**

### **Peterborough Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD (2019)**

## **4 Consultations/Representations**

### **PCC Peterborough Highways Services (09.06.21 and 11.06.21)**

No objections - The Transport Statement is acceptable in terms of the predicted impact on the highway. From the information contained therein, it is evident that the existing parking is at near to capacity, especially when taking into account the traffic generated by the proposal. The car parking surveys submitted indicate that there is sufficient space within the existing car parks for the proposed additional facilities, but it is recommended that an area for the potential future expansion of car parking is identified to overcome any potential issues.

The existing vehicular access to the parking area does not appear to be wide enough. The proposal would intensify its use and therefore should be widened to 5.5 metres. Adequate space appears available to accommodate this.

The 2 coach parking bays have been changed to mini bus parking bays on this drawing, but they still appear difficult to access. Swept path analysis should be provided to show how manoeuvres

would take place.

The proposed car park and access lighting is far brighter than the British Standard usually applied for highway lighting. A maximum level of 15 lux for the access road, and 10 lux for the car parking area is therefore suggested.

Conditions are requested securing: revision to the access width; parking and turning provision and retention; cycle parking provision and retention; a construction management plan/wheel cleansing; and revised lighting details.

**Lead Local Drainage Authority (15.06.21)**

No objection - Further to clarification provided by the Applicant's Drainage consultant, the proposed surface water drainage scheme is accepted. Request a condition securing details of the existing system that the development is proposed to discharge to and construction / technical details of all drainage assets prior to the commencement of development.

**PCC Conservation Officer (21.04.21 and 17.02.21)**

No objections - The proposed air dome is located outside an important viewing arc of Orton Hall (and its associated buildings) and will only be appreciated in association with the Listed Buildings from non-significant locations. As such there is not considered to be a material detrimental impact from the development upon the Listed Buildings.

With regard the Orton Longueville Conservation Area, the boundary follows the tree line and will be directly adjacent to the air dome proposed pitch. The significance of the Conservation Area to the west and south of the site is as part of the historical wooded walkway. The school has changed the character and relationship of the site to the Conservation Area. The character of the site is firmly of a school with associated sports facilities and this is considered the established baseline.

Whilst there is no heritage objection to this proposal in terms of its impact on the nearby conservation area and listed buildings, planning officers should consider the rather alien appearance and prominent siting of this structure upon the public realm of Oundle Road, which is considered to be awkward at best.

**PCC Archaeological Officer (02.06.21)**

No objections - The site is located within an area of known archaeological interest, with potential for the presence of significant archaeological remains. Whilst the site includes the demolished school buildings which originally occupied part of the current gravel car park, there are areas which have not been affected by truncation. With reference to the depth of groundwork, levelling may still affect upper deposits/features, as indicated by the contour which naturally slopes northwards to the River Nene. Therefore, given the archaeological potential of the site, monitoring of groundwork operations in the undisturbed/least disturbed areas of the proposed development site is recommended.

**PCC Wildlife Officer (26.05.21 and 06.04.21)**

No objections - The site chosen for the development is mostly amenity grassland which has poor connectivity to the surrounding countryside. This results in habitat which is limited in its potential for providing ecosystem services and biodiversity. Any loss in biodiversity will be more than adequately compensated for with the native tree screen being planted.

**PCC Tree Officer (07.06.21, 21.04.21 and 04.02.21)**

No objection - No object to the proposed development in principle, despite the loss of the early mature Beech tree located within the raised brick planter. Pleased to see and accept the additional planting on the highest part of the bund, adjacent to the site fencing and the existing car parking, included within the revised Tree Screen Planting Plan.

**PCC Pollution Team (12.02.21 and 25.02.21)**

No objections - With regards to external lighting, it is recommended that the Applicants be required

to demonstrate compliance with the Institute of Lighting Professionals 'Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light: Guidance Note 01:20'. This could be secured by condition.

With regards to noise, it I anticipated that the plant inflating the dome would result in a noise level of 29.6dB(A) at the nearest sensitive receptor. This is accepted. The issue of games noise was considered in the application 14/02021/R4FUL. The hours of use proposed are also accepted.

**Sport England (01.06.21)**

No objections - Whilst the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years, the proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

Request conditions that secure: confirmation that the pitch is certified in terms of the quality of artificial turf; has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches; and a Community Use Agreement.

**Environment Agency (25.05.21)**

No comments.

**Orton Longueville Parish Council (04.06.21, 06.04.21 and 05.02.21)**

Observations - The service road needs to be moved away from residential properties and native trees should be planted to obstruct the view of both the dome and road. The planting of native trees should also help to reduce noise and pollution. The tree screen plan does not appear to have sufficient trees being planted to compensate

There are concerns that formalising the car park could make flooding much worse on Oundle Road which is already prone to flooding after heavy rainfall. Can it be ensured that the car park has adequate drainage to disperse rainfall and not just leave it to slide over onto Oundle Road.

**Peterborough Cycling Forum**

No comments received.

**Local Residents/Interested Parties**

Initial consultations: 70

Total number of responses: 15 (including the Parish Council)

Total number of objections: 14

Total number in support: 0

Local Residents/ Interested Parties:

Three rounds of public consultation have taken place on the application.

***First Round***

A total of 11no. letters of objection were received raising the following concerns:

**Flooding**

- drainage of this site regularly causes significant run off down the shared access with the school onto Oundle Road. Hard surfacing will make this area less porous and cause a greater flooding risk.
- please ensure the plans for hard surfacing include improvements in site drainage
- how will the ground cope with the excess rain water
- what will happen to all the rain water from the dome as at the moment the drain at the entrance to new parking overflows and water runs down the road to the main road
- drainage in general is an issue at the site which can be seen after only limited rainfall at the exit from the site onto Oundle Road which is regularly flooded.

- what investigations will take place to find out how water is getting into the gardens from the school
- when the Academy was built the old building were to be taken down and grassed over. Instead the building were reused and extra car parking was created which must have an effect on rain soaking into the land naturally
- has the council investigated why the surface water drains outside the Academy in Oundle Road continue to overflow?
- are there any plans to install extra drainage?
- another concern is the very poor drainage from the school site which is an ongoing problem causing water to flow into ours and neighbours properties
- the drainage is already a major issue, with water running down from the school had formed a great deal of ice making the area very dangerous.
- the option to drain away (rain)water freely on the site where you propose to build the air dome will be taken away
- we currently experience water logging in the gardens and we can only assume this will be increased.
- (application) doesn't provide a clear enough strategy in dealing with the site drainage in periods of high rainfall which already causes issues
- additional hard landscaped car parks would exacerbate the current problem despite storage tanks proposed.

### Trees

- How many trees will be placed in front of this air dome?
- the trees to screen the dome will take years to grow and who will tend to them
- -Given the potential increase in visits to the site (both in construction and through normal use) I would also like to emphasise the necessity to retain, maintain and potentially increase the planting schemes between the site and the residential properties to the West, which not only help restrict visibility impact, but also provide a necessary sound barrier to the site.
- double the amount of trees to be planted to reduce noise and pollution
- trees planted behind houses to obstruct view of car park and Dome

### Highway Safety and Parking

- will there be turning room in the new parking area?
- parking has consistently been an issue on site and, come home time, our road is full of cars regularly blocking the residents driveways. Having further amenities on the school site will only exasperate the situation.
- who would be responsible for any damage caused if there was to be a collapse in future of the service road leading to damage to my property?
- increase in traffic during and after the completion on what is already an extremely busy road
- the volume of traffic will only increase if the air dome is built, and as the proposal set out describes multiple increased facilities will be available, therefore increasing traffic visiting the site.
- omission in the Transport Statement of all the viewpoint from the neighbouring residents and the impact these changes will have on them
- only a brief mention that coaches are one mode of transport coming onto the site but they impact us residents when they park the other side of our fences, can there be a formal mention in the statement as to where they are going to park and turn round.
- sometimes coaches return to the site late in the evening and there are more than one coach coming onto the site having a greater impact.
- large vehicles such as coaches and lorries are often entering the site via the exit
- the new intended positioning of the car park is even nearer to our houses and will have an impact
- the entrance/exit to the Training Academy is directly behind our fences and so any increase in traffic will impact on us.

### Location and site

- the air dome and the 2 supporting facilities will only be detrimental to local residents
- could easily be built further south east to the rear of the school site.

### Design and character

- the eyesore that is the air dome and the 2 storey supporting facilities will only be detrimental to the local residents
- the sight of the planned dome will be a blot on the landscape and why can it not be further back?

### Other matters

- when the new school was planned and built the school and council said they would always be a good neighbour, the then plan has changed out of proportion
- lack of thought and consideration to the properties adjacent to the school site both when putting the application together and during the building work
- lack of thought and consideration during previous applications are sufficient reason to oppose this application: Eg: the stipulation of restricted working hours in previous applications were ignored, lack of consideration of the contractors used on site, issues such as large industrial equipment ignoring signs and damage to fencing
- concerns about the effect on our view this large construction will have so close to ours and neighbours properties
- the disruption the build itself will cause
- during the last build we were informed a large bank of trees would be planted to obscure the view but they never appeared.
- failure during the last build to stick to agreed working hours if this build goes ahead this must be addressed.
- extremely poor signage at school entrance and exit
- the signage is not an attractive thing to view out of people's windows
- continuous construction traffic
- I feel that owners and management of Peterborough United as well as any serving councillors would strongly object to this type of development so close to their home environment
- move the road away from houses to reduce noise and pollution
- Dome not used at weekends and Bank Holidays

### **Second Round**

A total of 7no. letters of objection were received raising the following concerns:

### Design and character

- scale of the proposal which would be further extending the built up footprint of the school site primarily in close proximity to existing housing
- the design of the dome is of significant visual impact and is not in keeping with the subtlety of the existing school buildings
- further to the revised plans I can see no improvements what so ever apart from the addition of extra trees which would take up to 20 years to mature and in the meantime we will not have the unsightly view of the proposed air dome obscured from our property.
- the changes to the proposed planning application which seem to be mainly around the addition of trees and shrubs, which will take year to be established and if not evergreen will not hide the huge building from our entire view.
- -nothing has changed from viewing the latest plan apart a few planted trees which will not obscure this 'out of place' structure
- surely this type of building should be away from local housing?
- along with the aforementioned points raised in my previous objections: which are drainage issues, extra vehicles and parking spaces, noise, unattractive signage, construction traffic and mere appearance and blocking of the view of many residents living here, this structure should not be built on the current site.
- I do not want to see a Dome (circus tent) behind my house
- concerns about the size of the proposed build, its impact on the surrounding environment by its

imposing nature and on the wildlife that will be impacted.

- This current application and subsequent revised application, yet again, ignores the land to the rear of the school and chooses to impact us, as local residents, again
- if the facility is deemed necessary and approved, could quite easily be built further south east to the rear of the school site

### Trees

- trees planted previously were also ripped up or snapped off
- trees will take 20-30 years to obstruct the view of the Dome (circus tent)
- the revised proposal encompasses a number of trees. Are there assurances that the school pupils will be respectful of these? or if there is attrition of the trees due to vandalism, will there be a means of them to be replaced?
- the trees that are proposed to appease the original objections will be saplings and not likely to reach maturity for a number of years.

### Drainage

- this will not resolve the current problem of the rainwater flowing down that current hill area which is creating flooding issues in our gardens.
- I have serious concerns that changing the car parking to permanent surfacing will worsen the already poor drainage from the site
- when the weather is freezing this is ice and creates a hazard for pedestrians and vehicles.
- the steady flow of water from the school site into our garden will only get worse with more amenities being built there
- Anglian Water have attended our property and confirmed that the Nene Park Academy site is the source of the significant amount of water flowing into our property that not only is starting to damage elements of our garden such as a large decked area and the stability of a large block paved area, but also the potential to have an impact on our property
- Drainage in general is an issue at the site which can be seen after only limited rainfall at the exit from the site onto Oundle Road which is regularly flooded

### Traffic and noise

- the noise from increased car parking facility and proposed increase in use of the site which would have a detrimental effect on residents in Longfield Gate especially where the service road runs along the back of the houses
- excess traffic visiting the proposed site will create our residential street becoming an overflow carpark.
- -the increased traffic is also not beneficial to the air quality
- there already seems to be increased activity on a Sunday morning with the front care parks behind our houses full. Will this increase further if the proposed dome is constructed?
- -traffic in front and behind Longfield Gate will double if this goes ahead.
- the improved facilities are likely to increase in the number of attendees at the facilities.
- Parking has consistently been an issue on site and, come home time, our road is full of cars regularly blocking the residents' driveways
- your proposal is to have activities throughout the day and evening, constant throughout the whole day. There is concern to the additional noise this will create which again will be constant.

### Other matters

- I note in Peterborough Matters that it states the demolition of the school building to make way for the new car park is due to start the 1st May 2021 if permission is granted. I hope therefore that this is not a forgone conclusion that our comments and huge concerns over outlook being seriously compromised are being considered.
- it is our opinion that not enough consideration has been given to the residents of Longfield Gate.
- the increase in noise and pollution levels since the easing of lockdown has been significant, in front and behind Longfield Gate.
- we need a reduction in noise and pollution for the sake of everyone's health and wellbeing

- you should first monitor the noise and pollution levels in front and behind Longfield Gate with within Environmental Guidelines.
- With regards to building work in general, the stipulation of restricted working hours in previous applications has been ignored
- Overall, a complete lack of thought and consideration along with the detrimental impact to ours and our neighbours' properties are more than sufficient reason to oppose this application.

### **Third Round**

2no. letters of objection was received raising the following concerns:

- a 10m tall camera/light mast has been erected directly behind our property today, and 3 similar height flag poles have previously been erected a few years ago, showing total disregard for local residents by the school and football club. Can the council confirm if planning permission is required for this type of erection please?
- Where have the trees gone from your latest plan? We need to plant more trees, not building a Dome to play football also adding another small football pitch (check your plan).
- Traffic in and behind Longfield Gate will double if this plan goes ahead.
- We need to see more trees behind our houses. This is needed to reduce noise and pollution, for the sake of health and wellbeing.
- All trees to be planted in front of fencing not behind (check your plan).
- Planners and Peterborough City Council don't you care about The Queen's Green Canopy, a tree planting initiative to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 to enhance our environment now, and for generations to come.

In addition, whilst not consulted, **Anglian Water** has made the following comments:

The foul drainage from this development is in the catchment of Peterborough (Flag Fen) Water Recycling Centre that would have available capacity for these flows. From the details submitted to support the planning application, the proposed method of surface water management does not relate to Anglian Water operated assets. The Local Planning Authority should seek the advice of the Lead Local Flood Authority or the Internal Drainage Board.

## **5 Assessment of the planning issues**

The main considerations are:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area
- Heritage considerations
- Traffic generation, parking and highway implications
- Drainage
- Neighbour amenity
- Ecology
- Trees

### **a) Principle of development**

#### Education and community benefit

The proposed air dome is sought to enhance the existing facilities of the PUFC Academy such that it meets with the English Football League's (EFL) criteria for a Category 2 Academy (there are 4 categories of football academy, with Category 1 being the highest status) which PUFC has ambitions to reach. The EFL describes Category 2 academies as 'an elite development environment' where players (typically recruited locally) gain access to additional coaching opportunities and education support. As such, the air dome and its associated accommodation building are primarily proposed for education use, with the Applicant advising that during the hours of 8.30am – 5pm, Monday-Friday, the facility would be primarily used by Nene Park Academy students.

Paragraph 94 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) highlights the importance of ensuring that adequate school places are available to support communities and advises that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools. Whilst the proposal would not in itself increase the capacity of either the PUFC Academy or secondary school (Nene Park Academy) on the site, it would offer enhanced provision of facilities that would improve the offer of the Academy which is considered to be broadly in line with the thrust of this paragraph.

Furthermore, paragraphs 91 and 96 of the NPPF highlight the importance of creating healthy, inclusive and safe places which secure access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. The Peterborough Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2017) identifies that southern central Peterborough (within which the application site is located), had a deficiency of 7.5 adult football pitches to meet 'current' demand.

The proposal would ensure that future generations of academy players and pupils of Nene Park Academy have access to elite sporting facilities which are available throughout the year, despite inclement weather. Furthermore, the site would offer community use after 5pm on weekdays and during weekends. The Applicant has advised that the proposal would increase the capacity for providing community use by up to 50% above existing levels, with over 500 Peterborough children receiving weekly coaching opportunities of between 4 and 12 hours a week. This would go towards meeting the current demands of the southern part of the City and bridging the gap that was identified within the Playing Fields Strategy.

It is acknowledged that this would bring about significant benefit to the wider community of the City and its sub-region.

#### Public open space

At present, the site is used as an open amenity grassed area and surface car park however as part of the redevelopment of the Nene Park Academy site whereby the secondary school was rebuilt, planning permission reference 11/01287/R3FUL), a condition was imposed (in part at Sport England's request) for the provision of 2no. junior pitches on the land subject to this application. To date, these pitches have not been provided. As such, the proposal represents the loss of public open space which has been/should be in use as playing fields.

Sport England are the statutory consultee on such applications and they have raised no objections as, in their view, the proposal would introduce a new facility that would be of benefit to the club, school, and local community such that the benefit outweighs the harm arising from the loss of playing field.

The proposed air dome (including the associated accommodation building) would represent high quality sporting facilities that would be available not only to the PUFC Academy, but Nene Park Academy and the wider community. This is considered to be a betterment in terms of sports provision to the 2no. junior grass pitches which should have been provided on the site, and accords with the provisions of paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

Taking the above into account, it is considered that the principle of development can be accepted in this instance subject to consideration of the proposal against other material planning considerations set out below.

#### **b) Design and impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area**

The proposed air dome and accommodation block would be sited on land which is readily visible from the public realm along Oundle Road. They would be sited on land which sits higher than the public highway, and at present this is relatively open and devoid of landscaping.

Turning first to the air dome, this is considered to be an unusual structure and the proposal would be the first seen in Peterborough. It is acknowledged that the Applicant has given consideration to

the finish of the dome, and attempted to assimilate it into its surroundings. As set out in Section 1 above, the dome is proposed to be finished predominantly in a white polyester fabric with the exception of the lower panels of the north-west (Oundle Road-facing) and north-east (woodland) elevation whereby the lower 3 metres would be finished with a graduating green band and white in panels. Furthermore, the proposal includes a detailed scheme of tree planting adjacent to the north-eastern elevation of the air dome, between this and the existing surface drop-off area/car park. The scheme proposed includes some faster growing trees to provide early screening with the remaining species mirroring the style of planting on the Orton Hall site to the east.

Whilst these attempts to reduce the impact of the proposal are noted, Officers do not consider that they would be sufficient to reduce the harm that would result to the visual amenity of the area. The dome, by nature of its finish, height and appearance, would appear a wholly incongruous and alien feature within the locality. A large proportion of its stark white plastic membrane would be visible at a considerable distance, protruding above any landscaping that would take place (even once established which would take a considerable amount of time). This would be compounded by its siting, on higher ground than the surrounding public realm, which would only add to the dome's dominance and obtrusive impact. It is not considered that the proposed planting would be sufficient to adequately screen the development, at least not so for a considerable number of years whilst the trees mature and establish and even after that time, the dome would stand at such a height that much of the planting would not screen. Even the fastest growing would take years to reach a height whereby the dome did not appear dominant or obtrusive.

With regards to the proposed accommodation building, this would be some 5 metres lower than the height of the proposed air dome, and of a size and scale which is considered to be respectful of the existing buildings and development on the wider site. Furthermore, the additional hardstanding would not be readily visible and would largely serve to formalise parking that is already present albeit in a neater and visually attractive manner (changing from hardstanding to a solid-bound surface). There is no objection to the proposed accommodation building.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposed air dome would represent a wholly incongruous and alien feature which would appear unduly dominant and obtrusive within the streetscene. The proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character, appearance and visual amenity of the surrounding area and as such, is contrary to Policy LP16 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

### **c) Heritage considerations**

#### *Above-ground heritage assets*

The wider Nene Park Academy site is bound on three and a half sides by the designated Orton Longueville Conservation Area, and the western boundary of the school abuts the curtilage of the Grade II Listed Orton Hall and its associated buildings. Furthermore, there is a designed view from the former Orton Hall across what is now the grounds of the school.

Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) require that special regard be paid to the desirability of protecting listed buildings and their settings, and also to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. This is further reinforced through the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) which states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets.

Significance is one of the guiding principles in relation to assessing the impact of proposals upon the historic environment, and is defined in the NPPF as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest'. Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic, and it may derive not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

The City Council's Conservation Officer has raised no objections to the proposal in terms of the impact upon nearby designated heritage assets. With regards to the Conservation Area (CA), the

boundary follows the existing tree line which surrounds the wider school site and this tree line would be directly adjacent to the proposed air dome pitch. The significance of the Conservation Area to the west and south of the site is as part of the historical wooded walkway (Wellingtonia Avenue). However, the Conservation Officer has advised that the school is located, and takes up, the entire open inner section of this avenue and, that this has changed the character and relationship of the site to the Conservation Area. The character of the site is firmly of a school with associated sports facilities and this is considered the established baseline against which the proposal should be assessed. It is not considered that the proposed air dome or accommodation building would alter this relationship, as the development would read as part of the school buildings. On this basis, it is not considered that the proposal would harm the character or appearance of the CA.

With regards to the adjacent Listed Buildings, the Conservation Officer has advised that the main impact would be to the important view from Orton Hall across the ha-ha within the grounds. The view is appreciated from the Hall looking out at what is now an all-weather pitch, a relationship that was previously found to be acceptable through the granting of planning permission reference 14/02021/R4FUL. Further, this view has been reduced in scope due to the overgrown nature of what is the immediate north of the Wellingtonia Avenue such that it is of limited contribution to the significance of the Listed Building. The proposed air dome would be located to the north of this viewing arc and only appreciated in association with the Listed Buildings from non-significant locations. Indeed, even then they will not be viewed in the same view. As such, the Conservation Officer has advised there is not considered to be a material detrimental impact from the development upon the Listed Buildings, and Officers see no grounds upon which to disagree with this view.

On the basis of the above, the proposal would not result in harm to the significance of above-ground heritage assets and is in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

#### Archaeology

The application site is located within an area of known archaeological interest, and investigations within the wider school site have found assets which suggests Anglo-Saxon activity in vicinity. Whilst the proposed air dome, accommodation building and car parking would be located on land which has been largely subject to previous development, the Council's Archaeologist has advised that there are areas which have not been affected by truncation and therefore buried archaeological assets may remain undisturbed. As such, the associated groundworks and site levelling may affect upper deposits/features. Therefore, given the archaeological potential of the site, monitoring of groundwork operations in the undisturbed/least disturbed areas of the proposed development site is recommended.

Taking this into account, it is considered necessary and reasonable that archaeological investigation be secured prior to the commencement of any development on the site. This could readily be dealt with by way of a condition. Subject to this, the proposal would not result in harm to potential undiscovered buried heritage and therefore the proposal is in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

#### **d) Traffic generation, parking and highway implications**

The application has been accompanied by a Transport Statement which sets out the predicted transport impacts arising from the proposal. This has been reviewed by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) who accept its contents as being an adequate prediction of the likely traffic generation arising from the proposal.

The vehicular access from Oundle Road serves not only Nene Park Academy and the PUFC Academy, but also St Botolph's Primary School. It was subject to significant improvement over recent years and includes a large area of parking for drop-off/pick-up and is fully signalised. A bus stop is located immediately outside the site, with a dedicated pedestrian crossing.

Oundle Road is relatively heavily trafficked and serves as one of the arterial routes into the City Centre from the west. Whilst the Applicant has been unable, due to the current pandemic, to undertake accurate traffic counts of this junction, it is understood that at peak times, it operates close to capacity whereas for large parts of the day and at weekends it does not.

### Traffic generation

With regards to traffic generation, the existing situation has been assessed with traffic surveys carried out. Whilst these were undertaken during the pandemic, they were done at a time when both the secondary school and PUFC Academy were operating normally and as such, have therefore been accepted. The surveys show clearly that there are a relatively significant number of movements at school peak times (08:00 to 10:00 and 14:00 to 17:00) but also that a relatively high number of movements continue throughout the evening. Indeed, between 18:00 and 20:00 hours, 72 movements were observed which is generated by the changeover between Academy training sessions.

In terms of the proposal, the Applicant has advised that it would result in 10 additional staff members (from 27 to 37) who would work from the site during normal school hours. This would result in an additional 7 movements at school peak times. With regards to student numbers, the Applicant has advised that these would largely not increase, as the facility is not intended to increase capacity in terms of the number of players on roll in the Academy. Therefore, there would be no significant increase in traffic arriving/leaving the site at drop-off/pick-up during peak school hours.

However, the proposal would result in additional usage out of hours and by the community, which the Applicant states would be in the region of a 50% increase (at most) above and beyond the current community usage of the site. This would result in an increase in vehicular movements to/from the site after the school peak by that amount (a factor of 1.5). The TS anticipates that this would mean an additional 16 vehicles in the highway afternoon peak (i.e. end of the working day) and between 19:00 and 20:00 hours, where movements would increase by approximately 26 vehicles (taking the amount to 98 movements within the hour). The LHA has accepted these estimates, advising that they are an appropriate prediction of the likely traffic generation arising from the development.

The predicted increase in traffic is not considered likely to result in a significant adverse impact to the surrounding public highway network. At school peak times, the traffic increase would be relatively modest (only 7 vehicles) and the largest traffic increase from the proposal would occur outside of peak times whereby the junction and highway surrounding the site has adequate capacity.

### Parking

There is a significant amount of development within the wider site comprising both education and community use. This includes facilities such as the all-weather pitch to the south-eastern corner of the site which, when granted planning permission (reference 14/02021/R4FUL), was subject to a condition which secured a parking strategy for the wider site.

There are currently approximately 60 car parking spaces (not demarcated) provided within the gravel area to the north of the main PUFC Academy building and these would be removed to accommodate the proposed air dome and accommodation building. However, the proposal seeks to re-provide these within the area further to the west, on land upon which a building (known as the Lakeside building) once stood (recently demolished). This would provide 60 new parking spaces which would be solid-bound and formally marked out. As such, the proposal represents no net loss of parking spaces.

Parking accumulation surveys were undertaken to identify the current usage of the parking gravel parking area. These identified that the area was utilised at close to capacity throughout the school day. Further, the LHA has advised that aerial photography shows evidence that grass areas

adjacent to this gravel car park show evidence of use (tyre marks). However, the surveys identified that there is currently adequate capacity to accommodate the 10no. additional staff members that the proposal would generate during school hours. As such, the proposed 60no. re-provided spaces would be sufficient during normal school hours.

Outside of school hours, the other car parks within the wider site are largely available and these are considered adequate to accommodate the additional vehicle parking that would be generated by the community use of the pitch/accommodation proposed.

Whilst it is noted that the LHA has advised that additional parking should be considered, with 20no. additional spaces generally considered to be needed as resulting from a new pitch, they have raised no objection to the proposal nor requested a condition that additional parking be provided. This is because, on balance, evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the formalisation of the 60no. spaces proposed is capable of accommodating the parking generated by the proposal.

With regards to coach parking, the Applicant has advised that there may occasionally be additional trips to/from the site by coach. However there is adequate space within the wider site to safely accommodate drop-off/pick-up such that no undue harm to highway safety would result. Mini bus parking is proposed, with 2no. spaces shown on the submitted car park layout. The LHA has requested tracking of these spaces to demonstrate how mini buses would manoeuvre, however Officers are of the view that there is adequate space within the vehicle circulation areas such that tracking would not be required.

#### Lighting

The LHA has raised concern with regards to the brightness of the proposed lighting to the car park and access road. A detailed lighting assessment has been submitted, advising that the lighting to the car parking areas would be 30 lux based upon the Applicant's assessment of the environmental category in which the site falls - zone E3 'medium brightness district'. However, the LHA disagrees with this stance, as do Officers. The lighting is considered to be excessively bright for a site which, whilst suburban in its setting, is relatively dark at present and the LHA has advised that the lighting could pose a risk to safety of the adjacent highway. As such, it should be revised to be no brighter than 15 lux (access road), and 10 lux (car park). This could readily be secured by condition.

#### Cycle parking

Secure covered cycle parking for 20no. cycles is proposed as part of the proposal. Further, there is already significant cycle parking capacity within the wider site that could be utilised at times of community use. This is considered adequate given the amount of development proposed and would encourage more sustainable methods of travel to/from the site.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposal would not result in a severe impact to the capacity of the surrounding public highway, safe access would be afforded to all users, and adequate parking provision would be retained to meet the demands arising from the development. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal accords with Policy LP13 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and paragraph 109 of the NPPF (2019).

#### **e) Drainage**

The application has been accompanied by a flood risk and drainage technical note which has been reviewed by the City Council's Drainage Engineer.

The proposal seeks to deal with surface water generated by the proposed development by means of infiltration. The submitted scheme proposes to collect the surface water run-off from the dome roof via land drainage on both sides of the roof and convey this into a storage/infiltration tank in the car parking area. In turn, the car parking area is proposed to be constructed of permeable paving which would also allow drainage from the roof of the accommodation block directly into it. The infiltration tank would then directly infiltrate the water into the underlying gravelly sand, particularly in the northern section of the parking area. However due to the varying extent of infiltration across

the site, the Applicant proposes to a high level overflow restricted discharge into the existing drainage system serving the site.

Broadly, the Council's Drainage Engineer accepts these proposals. However, they have advised that information remains outstanding with regards to the detail of the existing drainage system and the technical drawings of the construction details of the drainage assets. The outstanding information relates to the proposal that overflow from the proposed system would enter the existing drainage network for the site. The Drainage Engineer has however advised that the outstanding information could be secured by way of a condition should permission be granted.

It is considered that the proposal has demonstrated that surface water run-off from the development would be adequately managed and that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable flood risk either on the site or elsewhere. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy LP32 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019), paragraphs 155 and 163 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the Peterborough Flood and Water Management SPD (2019).

#### **f) Neighbour amenity**

The proposed development would be sited in relatively close proximity to a number of residential properties within Longfield Gate. At the closest point, the accommodation block (which would sit between the residential properties and the air dome) would be sited some 38 metres from the shared boundary with No.4 Longfield Gate and 45 metres from that dwelling's primary habitable windows. Whilst the proposed car parking area would be sited some 5 metres closer. It is accepted that this degree of separation, despite the significant ground level difference (whereby Longfield Gate properties sit on lower ground), is sufficient to ensure that the proposed building would not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy to residential occupants. The distance would be adequate to ensure that sufficient privacy was maintained and prevent undue overbearing.

However, Officers are of the view that the proposal would represent a significant intensification of the use of the site, particularly during after school hours, in the evenings and at weekends. It should be noted that at present, the use of the Nene Park Academy and PUFC Academy buildings are unrestricted in terms of their hours of use. The all-weather pitch operated by PUFC is subject to restricted hours however, and is only permitted to be in use between 08:00 to 21:00 hours Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 17:00 hours on Saturdays, Sundays and Public/Bank Holidays. The Applicant proposes that these hours of use would apply to the current proposal.

The Applicant has advised (as detailed above) that the proposed air dome and facilities would be capable of increasing the capacity of the Academy out of school hours by 50% and the submitted Transport Statement has identified that between 19:00 and 20:00 hours up to 98 vehicle movements could result. This represents the worst level of traffic movements but the submitted TS identifies that relatively considerable traffic movements following closure of the facility (at 21:00 hours) resulting in up to 51 traffic movements. This is considered likely to result in undue levels of noise and general disturbance to neighbouring occupants, and at a time when those occupants would reasonably expect a quiet level of amenity. This disturbance would result from the access road which runs immediately adjacent to the garden boundaries of properties in Longfield Gate, the opening and closing of car doors within the car park, the revving of engines, and the general noise from talking and the congregation of people arriving/leaving the facility. Whilst it is accepted that at present some degree of disturbance occurs to residents, the proposal would bring this closer and to a more intensive level such that unacceptable harm to amenity would result.

With regards to the air dome itself, this is constantly inflated using plant/machinery which would be sited close to the tree line along the western boundary of the site. The City Council's Pollution Control Officer has advised that this machinery would not likely result in undue levels of noise to neighbouring residential properties.

In addition, whilst Officers are mindful that the dome would 'glow' during the hours of darkness, it is not considered that the level of light glow would be such that it would constitute an intrusion to

residential properties. The dome would clearly be visible to them, but this would not constitute a nuisance.

Turning to the proposed car park lighting, the Applicant proposes relatively bright levels of lighting as they consider the site constitutes a 'medium district brightness'. However, Officers are of the view that the site is presently intrinsically dark and therefore, this characterisation is not correct. The Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 01/21 'The Reduction of Obtrusive Light' advises on the design of lighting to ensure that it does not pose a nuisance to neighbouring occupants and the overall amenity of an area. Officers are of the view that the application site should be characterised as a 'low district brightness' (Zone E2) within this document, which sets out lower light levels than those which are currently proposed. Therefore, at present, the lighting proposal would appear unduly bright to neighbouring occupants. Whilst this would not in itself represent light intrusion or amenity harm, a lower brightness level is considered necessary. This could however be secure by way of a condition securing an alternative lighting layout/scheme.

Taking the above into account, it is considered that the proposal would result in an unacceptable level of harm to the amenities of neighbouring residential occupants and is therefore contrary to Policy LP17 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

#### **g) Ecology**

The majority of the site upon which the development would be situated is not considered to be of high biodiversity value. This view is agreed by the Council's Wildlife Officer who has advised that the site is mostly amenity grassland which has poor connectivity to the surrounding countryside. This results in habitat which is limited in its potential for providing ecosystem services and biodiversity. Accordingly, the proposal is likely to result in limited loss of biodiversity. However, any loss is considered to be more than compensated for by way of the proposed planting to the front of the air dome.

Notwithstanding the value on the site itself, the woodland to the east of the site for the air dome is known to be sensitive in terms of bats (both roosting and foraging). This has been established through numerous bat surveys undertaken in respect of previous applications for development on the Nene Park Academy site. However, the submitted lighting layout demonstrates that light levels adjacent to this woodland area would be to 3 lux, which accords with the lighting levels previously accepted in respect of previous developments on the site. As such, the proposal would not result in excessive lighting to the woodland which could cause harm to foraging or roosting bats.

Taking the above into account, the proposal would not result in any net loss of biodiversity or harm to species of principal importance. It is therefore in accordance with Policy LP28 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and the Peterborough Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity SPD (2019).

#### **h) Trees**

Within the Nene Park Academy site are a number of mature and established trees, along with those which were planted as part of the redevelopment of the site less than 10 years ago. The proposal seeks to retain all but one tree, with the removal of an early-mature beech tree proposed. The loss of this tree has been accepted by the Council's Tree Officer as the proposal includes the planting of a substantial, and largely native, tree screen to the north of the proposed air dome. This planting includes 59no. trees which is more than adequate compensation for the loss of the tree proposed and exceeds the planting requirement set out in Policy LP29 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

#### **i) Other matters**

In response to those objections raised which are not discussed above:

- 10m camera pole/light

Whilst not a consideration for this application, this was installed to undertake traffic surveys needed to inform the Transport Statement. It is a temporary structure.

## **6 Conclusions**

The proposal is unacceptable having been assessed in light of all material considerations, including weighing against relevant policies of the development plan and for the specific reasons given below.

Officers acknowledge that the proposal would result in an elite football academy within the City which would offer enhanced sporting facilities for not only the PUFC Academy itself but also Nene Park Academy, local schools and the wider community. Officers further acknowledge that under the provisions of the NPPF, this benefit should be afforded considerable weight.

However, harm has been identified as arising from the proposal. The proposed air dome would appear a wholly incongruous and alien feature which harms the visual amenity of the locality, and considerable and unacceptable harm would result to the amenities of neighbouring occupants.

It is considered that the harm that has been identified would not be outweighed by the benefits of the proposal and therefore, taking account of the planning balance, the scheme is considered to be unacceptable.

## **7 Recommendation**

The case officer recommends that Planning Permission (Regulation 4) is **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

- R 1 The proposed air dome pitch, by virtue of its design, size, scale and siting, would result in a wholly incongruous and alien feature within the surrounding locality. The proposed tree belt landscaping would not afford sufficient screening to prevent the structure from appearing unduly obtrusive and visually dominant within the streetscene. The proposal would therefore result in unacceptable harm to the character, appearance and visual amenity of the surrounding area which is contrary to Policy LP16 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).
  
- R 2 The proposal, by virtue of its siting, size and scale, would result in a significant intensification of the use of the wider site during evenings and weekends. This would bring about increased levels of noise and general disturbance within the car parking, access and circulation areas that currently exist and are proposed in close proximity to residential properties in Longfield Gate. Such disturbance would take place to an unacceptably greater level than at present, at times when neighbouring occupants should reasonably be expected to enjoy a quiet level of amenity. Accordingly, the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbouring occupants and is contrary to Policy LP17 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

Copies to Councillors: Casey, Skibsted and Walsh

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