

WEST LAVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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West Lavington Parish Council Response to Planning Application 18/11759/VAR

West Lavington Parish Council strongly objects to Planning Application 18/11759/VAR which seeks to vary planning permission K/420947 to allow a different surface material for an outdoor sports track, with proposed landscaping to reduce visual impact.

BACKGROUND

Planning Permission K/420947 permitted change of use of the site from agricultural land to use of playing fields and outdoor sports facilities, including a grass athletics track.

Planning Permission K/58271/F provided for landscaping and ground remodelling to facilitate K/420947.

The permissions required:

- no hardstandings, **no buildings or structure**, or wall close boarded fencing **or other means of enclosure** to be erected on site unless part of the landscaping plan or granted separate planning permission
- **all soft landscaping** [to] be **carried out in their entirety prior to** first use of the site as playing fields or in **the first planting and seeding season following the first use of the car park (whichever is the sooner)**. This also included maintenance and management obligations.

Reasons given:

- to **ensure** a satisfactory **landscaped setting** for the development
- to **ensure** the long term proper management of the landscaped areas in the interests of **visual amenity**
- in the **interests** of **visual amenity** of this edge of village site.

Following the granting of permission, the School:

- has installed a highly coloured red-surfaced athletics track with highly visible white fencing **contrary to** the repeated objectives of K/042974 and K/58271/F regarding “landscaped setting” and “visual amenity”
- has **failed to fulfil** in full the landscaping conditions of K/58271/F that “All soft landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first use of the car park”. The car park has been in use for several years
- has erected fencing **contrary to** the explicit requirements of both K/042974 and K/58271/F

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- has installed a metal structure inside the circle of the track **contrary to** the explicit requirements of both K/042974 and K/58271/F – this is not covered by the latest application.

APPLICATION18/11759/VAR

Application 18/11759/VAR now seeks retrospective permission to install a red-coloured synthetic track (already built) in place of the grass track permitted by K/420947 and includes a supplemental planting scheme that seeks to screen from view the red-coloured synthetic track and white fencing. The key material planning consideration is the impact of the proposal on the landscape character and visual amenity.

While the Parish Council welcomes the School’s scheme of further planting and management, it remains greatly concerned by the comments of Wiltshire Council’s Landscape Officer who acknowledges that the proposed woodland planting may never screen the athletics track in its entirety from all elevated views, although “over time” it will lessen the track’s prominence. She accepts as “adequate” the School’s contribution to complying with Core Policy 51.

Core Policy 51 provides *inter alia* that “important views and visual amenity” are aspects of landscape character that need to be “conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures”.

The Council highly applauds the School’s expressed intention to widening access and the opening up of the facilities to local schools and clubs as well as pupils of the School. This is very good news.

However, that does not get over the fact that, in the recent article in the Gazette and Herald, **the School ignored the equally important concerns regarding the wider community of West Lavington parish** and those who live and walk and wish to enjoy, with other admirers of our countryside, the outstanding views and vista of the natural landscape setting.

Nor has the School taken into account that the School has contravened a number of important conditions of planning permissions granted over the years in relation to the site and which were expressly laid down by Wiltshire Council planners to ensure visual amenity and landscaping setting. Without planning permission, and to reiterate, the School has

- built a very large highly visible red-surfaced athletics track with highly visible white fencing intrusive to views and vistas over the countryside and **contrary to** the repeated conditions laid down regarding “landscaped setting” and “visual amenity”
- **failed to fulfil** in full landscaping conditions which, if they had been complied with within the timeframe provided, would already have produced some screening
- erected fencing **contrary to** the explicit requirements of two planning applications not to erect any means of enclosure
- installed a metal structure inside the circle of the track **contrary to** explicit requirements not to build any structure – and which is not covered by this latest application.

West Lavington Parish Council remains unconvinced that the planting now proposed by the School, in its current application, which, according to Wiltshire Councillor’s Landscape Officer, will only mature “over-time” and may never entirely screen the red surfaced track, provides an “adequate” solution when considering the impact of the proposal on “landscape character” and the “visual amenity” of the setting - situated in the Pewsey Vale and visible from Strawberry Hill and the Ridgeway at Market Lavington, where the WWI Commemorative Toposcope will be situated.

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Furthermore, the School's proposal will mean that, for years to come, its proposal will not remedy the situation at all. The red track and white fencing will stand out against the natural green of the landscape. Even when mature, in winter months, since the trees are mostly deciduous in nature, the track and fencing will remain visible.

CONCLUSION

In order to short-circuit what is manifestly a long-term solution proposed by the School, and which may never prove wholly achievable, West Lavington Parish Council considers that

- in the interests of today's community and its walkers' and ramblers' enjoyment of the spectacular vistas afforded by the natural environment, and
- equally importantly, in seeking to **avoid a delay** in use by students of the School and others of the track

the School should:

- Commit immediately to making the track green in colour in a similar fashion as was required by the National Trust in relation to Stowe School's athletic track, described now as environment friendly
- Remove the fencing altogether (as at Stowe) or camouflage it by repainting in a colour that ensures merger with the landscape – possibly brown
- Commence planting in accordance with its supplemental proposed planting scheme, and to include planting at the southern end of the site (where no planting is proposed), the track being visible from the Ridgeway above Market Lavington (not only from Strawberry Hill) and needing eventual screening
- Remove or disguise with a suitably coloured cladding or paintwork finish (camouflage) in place of the shiny metal, the metal structure within the circle of the track, already built without apparent planning permission, contrary to the explicit requirements of both K/042974 and K/58271/F – and not covered by the latest **Application 18/11759/VAR** .