

Barnes Community Association

MENS' SHED

at the

WWT London Wetland Centre car park

**'VERY SPECIAL CASE' AND
PLANNING POLICIES REPORT**

Resubmission of planning application. Previous reference: 20/0461/FUL

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Auust 2020

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INTRODUCTION

The Mens' Shed project is one that is supported by the local community in the form of the Barnes Community Association (BCA) and Richmond Council have contributed to funding it. But because the proposed site is within Metropolitan Open Land, even though in an obscured part of a car park, it runs counter to the Council's planning policy LP13.

For a long time, research has shown the negative impact of loneliness and isolation on a person's health and wellbeing. Recently, more evidence come to light that shows loneliness and isolation can be as hazardous to our health as obesity and excessive smoking. Surveys from mental health charities are finding that millions of people report feeling lonely on a daily basis.

Men typically find it more difficult to build social connections than women, and unlike women of a similar age, fewer older men have networks of friends and rarely share personal concerns about health and personal worries. It is not the case for all men, but for some, when retirement comes, it can feel like personal identity and purpose is lost and ill health can follow. Men's Sheds can change all of that.

Sheds are about meeting like-minded people and having someone to share your worries with. They are about having fun, sharing skills and knowledge with like-minded people and gaining a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. As a by-product of all of that, they reduce isolation and feelings of loneliness; they allow men to deal with mental health challenges more easily and remain independent; they rebuild communities; and in many cases, they save men's lives.

There is, therefore, a vital need for such a facility.

Whilst we realise that Metropolitan Open Land designation provides land with a similar level of protection as the Green Belt, the Mens' Shed project is one that is also very much supported by other national and local planning policies. The BCA therefore believes that a Very Special Circumstance case exists for locating a Men's Shed on this site given that an exhaustive search was made for other locations in Barnes and none found to be suitable.

This report is to provide the evidence to justify planning consent for the Shed project on the basis that:

- **that it is in principle supported by many national planning policies**
- **that it is in principle supported by virtually all the Council's relevant planning policies,**
- **that planning policies inevitably to some extent conflict with each other,**
- **that planning policies specifically state that there can be exceptions to the policies,**
- **that the Mens' Shed will be part of the MOL by servicing activities on it,**
- **that the Council's planning policies should not discriminate against older people, by denying them appropriate recreational facilities,**
- **that, after searching for other sites, the proposed site is the only one available in Barnes.**

It is clear that because there are often compelling and conflicting circumstances involved, planning law and policy is specifically written to permit discretion and exceptions to policies.

The overwhelming evidence is that this project is one of those exceptions and should be treated as a very special case.

This report has therefore identified national planning policies and those in the Local Plan that support the project in order to draw attention to the weight they have compared to the one policy that in principle does support the project.

This report also maintains that the Council should not interpret its policies in a discriminatory way. Recreational activities are permitted on MOL, but this should not just mean walking and running about. Many older people can no longer run about, but want to take part in more sedate recreational activities.

These sedate recreational activities should not be excluded from the MOL. The purpose of the Shed project is to provide a place for such recreational activities just as the current buildings on the MOL support the 'running about' activities. It is not a large building like a leisure centre or swimming pool. It is far smaller than the existing buildings on the MOL that support the activities on the MOL, like the Mens' Shed is intended to do.

The format of this report is to reproduce extracts from national and local planning policies and provide a commentary on how the Mens' Shed supports those policies, although the words of the policies mostly speak for themselves.

The Richmond upon Thames Planning Committee and National Inspectorate is invited to review this weight of evidence in support of the development and come to the conclusion that the development is:

- **not inappropriate nor harmful to the MOL, but by servicing them will in fact be as integral to the recreational purposes on the MOL as the other buildings on it.**
- **Is wanted and needed by the local community, and there is a very special case for this development on MOL.**

SECTION A.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES (NPPF)

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Feb 2019

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Feb 2019 sets out the framework for local planning policies. Issue by issue, Section A of this report reproduces the words in the national policies that support this planning application for a Mens' Shed project.

The paragraph numbering is from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Feb 2019 paras 133 – 147.

A 1. Social cohesion, health and wellbeing of communities.

One of the objectives of the Shed project is to improve health and well-being in the community as well as social cohesion. It does that by providing a place for people to come to who might otherwise be lonely, and combats mental health issues. Furthermore, it will undertake practical work that supports the community by providing a making and mending services for other surrounding organisations, including those providing activities on the MOL, and for people in Barnes generally.

Local planning authorities are enjoined to be positive and creative and have policies that promote health, wellbeing and cohesion, and, one assumes, not to stand in the way of projects that do that. Being creative and positive presumably means reviewing an entrenched view on a policy like that for an MOL, in the light of the circumstances.

The following clauses are reproduced from the NPPF.

*8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives
b) a social objective
to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities,..... with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities health, social, cultural well being*

*20. Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:
c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure*

38. Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use... planning tools available, including permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

51. Local planning authorities are encouraged to use Local Development Orders to set the planning framework for particular areas or categories of development where the impacts would

be acceptable, and in particular where this would promote economic, social or environmental gains for the area.

91. *Local policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:*

a) promote social interaction

c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being

92. *To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;

The purpose of the Mens' Shed is to do just these things and is therefore deserving of planning consent.

A 2. Plans should respond to the needs of communities and be flexible.

It is inevitable that as the world changes so policies have to be able respond to that. The process of policy making is lengthy and costly so local authorities cannot be expected to keep renewing their plans. This is why the NPPF specifically allows departures from already agreed plans and this is such a case.

The NPPF also requires local authorities to work with applicants to improve social and economic conditions. In doing so of course, they have to take into account other policies but it is hard to understand how the Mens' Shed project can viewed as being inappropriate nor causing any harm.

Local communities can initiate neighbourhood plans working with the local authority. This all takes time to organise. In the meantime, the Council should recognise the desire of the Barnes Community and use the powers they have to support the project.

11. *a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area,*

12. *..... Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.*

13. *Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.*

29. *Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area.*

38. *Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use... planning tools available, including permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.*

52. *Communities can use Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders to grant planning permission. These require the support of the local community through a referendum. Local planning authorities should take a proactive and positive approach to such proposals, working collaboratively with community organisations to resolve any issues before draft orders are submitted for examination.*

In the case of the Shed project, a new need has been identified. The Council should recognise this and use the flexibility allowed within planning to support the Shed project and put into realistic context any consideration of 'inappropriateness' or 'harm' to the MOL by granting consent on its own merit or as a special case.

A 3. Local authorities may depart from existing plans.

The NPPF states that where there is a conflict, planning permission will not usually be granted. But, significantly, it goes on to say that local authorities can depart from their development plan if there are reasons to do so. The Shed project provides good reasons for the Council to do so.

12. *..... Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.*

47. *Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*

54. *Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.*

The Mens' Shed is a project which post-dates the Local Plan. The BCA considers that it is a necessary project for a new need and invites the Council to depart from existing plans to grant planning consent.

A 4. There can be exceptions to Green Belt policies.

At the heart of this application for a Mens' Shed is the fact that the only site, found after a thorough search in the area of the Barnes community, is on a car park on Metropolitan Open Land.

MOL is regarded in a similar way to Green Belt.

133. *The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.*

134. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

With regard to this application, the nature and location of the Shed project

- cannot be described as urban sprawl, because it is not like a housing estate nor a business park but a small one off timber shed,
- nor is there any question of it tending to help Barnes merge with Putney, because the site is not on the edge of the MOL – it is in the middle of it on land ancillary to the activities on the MOL,
- nor is there any question of it of encroaching upon the 'countryside' for the same reason.

Even so, despite the special designation, there can be exceptions made to the policies which deter development, as the following statements in the NPPF make clear:

137. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development

138. When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously developed and/or is well served by public transport.

It is our contention that the Shed is not only a service to the activities on the MOL (helping to maintain and repair the facilities of the sports and of the Wetlands activities for example) but as well as repairing and making things for the whole of Barnes, it is a recreational facility for older people whose sport and recreation is not necessarily outdoors any more. As such, the local planning authority should be planning positively and supporting this project which is to be located on a tarmaced car park.

141. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

The BCA submits that there is no alternative location for meeting the needs of the organisations already operating on the MOL and those of the local people of Barnes and should permit the MOL to be used for the Mens' Shed especially as the proposed site is brown land in the form of a tarmaced area used for parking cars.

A 5. Proposals must not cause 'harm' to the Green Belt.

One of the main tests for development in the Green Belt and by extension Metropolitan Open Land, is whether the development would be inappropriate and therefore harmful. The NPPF states:

143. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

144. When considering any planning application local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The Shed Project therefore has to show it is not one that is harmful or is a special case. The NPPF policy is:

145. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

146. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

f) development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

The BCA maintains that by reason of its providing a facility for the activities on the MOL, like the existing buildings and outbuildings of the Wetlands or the pavilions and changing rooms do, the Mens' Shed is not in conflict with MOL policy.

Nor does it have any impact on the openness of the MOL because the openness is already blocked by existing features such as fences, trees and other planting and a large wooded mound. Moreover the proposed site is screened by trees.

There is therefore no harm caused to openness of the MOL neither is the development is not inappropriate. The application is for a small shed not for a housing estate or business park for any other type of sprawl which Green belt and MOL policies were originally intended to contain.

A 6. Appropriateness of the proposed site for the recreational use.

Although Barnes is blessed with many sports fields for younger people, there are few local recreational facilities for older people who may not be able to play sports anymore. It therefore seems appropriate that the proposed site for the Shed - a recreational facility for older people - is at Barn Elms which has playing fields and changing rooms for recreation.

The proposed site, offered by the WWT, is situated within WWT's Barnes Wetlands Car Park adjacent to the playing fields. It will be located in the far south east corner of the car park beside the entrance to the overflow car park and WWT maintenance sheds. The perimeter of the proposed site is shielded by planting. The existing surface of the 27,000m² car park, of which the Shed would occupy 141m² (0.5%), is tarmac and therefore does not support any biodiversity.

Recreation with associated pavilions and changing rooms, already takes place on the MOL and this project is therefore appropriate. Planning policies should not discriminate against older people by denying them the chance of recreation with an associated building, just as the playing fields need buildings in the form of changing rooms, pavilions and gyms.

The location is therefore an appropriate one especially as it does not affect the openness of the MOL.

A 7. Appropriateness of the proposed site on account of low use impact.

The usage of the Shed will have very little impact on the MOL, nor on the people who go to the car parks and changing rooms to use the playing fields, nor on those who walk along Queen Elizabeth Walk, nor on the 177,000 annual visitors to WWT at Barnes nor on wildlife.

There is not enough space nor equipment for many people to use the Shed, therefore the number of people using the site will be low – perhaps between 5 to 12 at the most. The hours of use will be 9am to 4.30pm in the winter, and 5.30pm in the summer, when the Wetlands closes its gates.

Noise should not cause any disturbance. If it would do so, the WWT would not allow the Shed on its land to disturb the wildlife. The whole WWT car park, and therefore the proposed site, is not within the Wetlands SSSI so will not cause any detriment. The Biodiversity Report, written by the WWT, that accompanies this planning application testifies to this.

Mains drainage and electrical services, which will be invisible underground, are available in Queen Elizabeth within 7 metres of the Shed. Waste will be taken to an existing WWT area where it will be collected.

In such circumstances there can be little or no disturbance and impact to the MOL and the development is not therefore inappropriate nor harmful.

A 8. Appropriateness on account of low visual impact.

The Barnes Community Association and the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust require the Shed to achieve high environmental standards including its visual appropriateness to the site.

At the request of the WWT, the Shed design is to fit in as much as possible with the style of the existing buildings at the Wetlands. These have pitched roofs with solar panels. Because it is a temporary building, raised off the ground for this reason and to counter flood risk, a lightweight timber frame and clad Shed is proposed rather than the brick walls of the WWT buildings. The orientation takes advantage of a south facing site to use solar panels and the north facing side has roof lights for natural daylight to the interior. Both of these have clear environmental advantages.

The black or dark brown stained timber cladding will help reduce visual impact and contribute to the appearance of an 'agricultural' building which will suit the site - more so perhaps than the baskets of stone cladding of the nearby pavilion or the rendered blockwork of the other recently built changing rooms on other parts of the MOL. The pitch of the roof is a compromise between matching the existing WWT buildings, the need for 'workshop' headroom within the Shed, and the optimum angle for solar panels.

There is no open view across the MOL that is affected because the openness is already blocked and compromised by trees, fences, hedges and a high mound built to contain an ice-house. The site is hidden by these features and does itself have screening of more trees, hedging and fencing around it.

Views across the MOL will not be affected because of the location, size and design of the Shed and the project is therefore not inappropriate or harmful by reason of visual impact.

A 9. Renewable and low carbon development

Peripheral perhaps, but pertinent to the application, is an NPPF policy which applies to developments for renewable and low carbon developments. The NPPF policy is:

148. The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

154. When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*
- b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.*

The Mens' Shed is not specifically for renewable or low carbon purposes but it's design maximises south facing roof slopes at an optimum angle to generate as much power as it can from photovoltaics. It's construction too, also is a low impact sustainable one.

A 10. Inferences drawn from national guidance on planning conditions

Planning conditions are usually imposed upon the grant of consent but by looking at Government guidance (*Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 23 July 2019*) on the use of planning conditions, one can draw inferences as to how local authorities should approach decisions about an application. The guidance is helpful in explaining what the planning system should be encouraging, and discouraging, in terms of direction and policies.

Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum, and only used where they satisfy the following tests:

1. necessary;
2. relevant to planning;

3. relevant to the development to be permitted;
4. enforceable;
5. precise; and
6. reasonable in all other respects

We would argue that when considering an application for consent or refusal, a local authority should have in mind similar considerations. Points “3. *relevant to the development*” and “6. *reasonable in all other respects*”, are appropriate for this application.

The NPPF states,

“Model conditions can improve the efficiency of the planning process, but it is important not to apply them in a rigid way and without regard to whether the 6 tests will be met.”

And furthermore,

“Conditions should not be used where conditions unreasonably impact on the deliverability of a development.... Conditions which place unjustifiable and disproportionate financial burdens on an applicant will fail the test of reasonableness. In considering issues around viability, local planning authorities should consider policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting guidance on viability.”

“The objectives of planning are best served when the power to attach conditions to a planning permission is exercised in a way that is clearly seen to be fair, reasonable and practicable. It is important to ensure that conditions are tailored to tackle specific problems, rather than standardised or used to impose broad unnecessary controls.”

The criteria used by the local authority to judge the application are onerous and have an effect upon the project. The Mens' Shed is a simple building for a simple purpose, but Richmond standard planning policies have requirements which are broad and possibly somewhat over the top for such a small scale project. For example, a BREEAM excellent standard is required. This involves expenditure on specialist consultants which uses up away money granted for the project, even before any determination, and very high construction standards, which impose costs that probably do not need to be so high. This gnawing away at the donations raised may make the project unviable.

Our interpretation of these statements is that the planning process requires the local planning authority to judge applications in a reasonable way on their individual local merits and not in a standardised way and should also consider the effect on the viability of the project.

The BCA therefore invites the Council not to jeopardise this planning application with conditions that are too burdensome for the viability of the project.

A 11. Conclusion - the Mens' Shed alignment with national policies

The Mens' Shed is an appropriate development because:

- it serves the purposes of the activities on the land by repairing and maintaining items used on the playfields and their pavilions and the Wetlands,
- it provides a facility for recreation that will be partaken in by the older residents of Barnes, and recreation is a use activity already established on the MOL,

- it is on an unused part of already developed land which is tarmac,
- it is supported by the Barnes Community Association, Richmond Council and other local organisations and could be brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order were it not urgently needed,
- it has a tiny number of users who will be utterly insignificant in terms of impact compared with the number of people and their cars and coaches who use the rest of the MOL
- it's location is obscured and does not in any way affect the openness of the land,
- it's small size and it's style that fits in with the 'country' aesthetic and existing WWT facilities also reduces visual impact,
- for those users not walking nor cycling, it is very convenient for transport with several bus routes within 200 metres and one route even coming into the site,
- it is in line with other national planning policies, like supporting local communities and their well being.

Where there is any doubt concerning protecting existing planning policy, as can be seen from the policies highlighted in this Section, the National Planning Policy Framework encourages Local Authorities to take a flexible view of their planning policies and it also provides for the planning authority to make exceptions to policies.

There are site specific special circumstances surrounding this planning application. For the reasons given above the Mens' Shed is an appropriate, non-harmful development, and should therefore be an exception to a presumption against any building on the Metropolitan Open Land.

The BCA would like to draw attention to the above national planning policies and the circumstances of this project which the BCA believes justifies the granting of planning consent.

SECTION B.

RICHMOND STRATEGIC LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

The previous Section A examined the national policies that are relevant to this planning application. Issue by issue, Section A reproduced the words in the national policies that support the Shed project. This Section B does the same for the Local Plan policies of Richmond-upon-Thames.

B 1. Strategic Context, Vision and Objectives of the Plan

The Local Plan adopted by the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames in July 2018, with subsequent amendments, sets out the planning policies for the Borough having taken into account the National Planning Policy Framework and the London Plan.

Extracts from the Local Plan are reproduced below under a number of policy themes, to demonstrate how the Mens' Shed aligns with these.

The first thing to note is that the Richmond Local Plan acknowledges that local circumstances can allow departure from both National and London planning policies:

1.1.5Legislation requires that local authorities must take the NPPF into account when preparing their Local Plan. This means in practical terms that the Council should follow the guidance in national policy unless there is local evidence and circumstances that would justify a different approach.

1.1.6 the Local Plan should be in line with the London Plan, unless there is local evidence and circumstances that would justify a different approach.

The Mens' Shed project is one that is compatible with so many of Richmond's planning policies that the planning application for it deserves support. As is made clear from the above, Richmond may use its discretion to depart from national guidance where there is justification.

B 2. The Plan's Strategic Context

The Local Plan is very clear throughout that it is in order to support communities and localism and the health and wellbeing of the residents. Below are extracts from the local Plan which show the high importance of this support.

2.1.4 The overall vision, as set out in the Community Plan, is for a Borough where:

- people will lead happy lives and are able to enjoy life, with opportunities to learn, develop and fulfil their potential;*
- people can live as independently as possible in the local community and feel empowered to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing, and plan for their future;*
- the local character of the environment is protected and new development is high quality and compatible with local character, meets people's needs and provides opportunities for all; and*
- our towns and local centres are attractive, viable for businesses and contribute positively to the quality of life for residents and visitors.*

2.1.5 The Community Plan is based around three themes:

3. Being accountable to local people

2.1.6 *The Plan sets out the vision for a vibrant and sustainable community and voluntary sector to support residents and help them play a full role in community life.*

2.1.8 *The Council's Corporate Plan has three overarching aims:*

2. To build community capacity to enable residents and communities to take greater control over their lives and to shape and where appropriate deliver local services; and

2.1.9 *The corporate vision is for Richmond upon Thames to bewhere citizens can help change neighbourhoods in which they live;*

A borough where the most vulnerable of our residents are supported and where everyone can live as independently as possible with good health and a sense of wellbeing for the better.

2.1.10 *The Council's priorities are categorised under the themes of 'People', 'Place', 'Resources' and 'How we work', in order to align our business planning processes with our commissioning intentions. Within these themes, the following service priorities have been identified:*

1. People

- Protecting the most vulnerable*
- A healthy borough*

As Richmond's Local Plan says *"Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. It allows communities to influence the future of their local areas by preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the area. Neighbourhood plans are led and written by the community, not the Council and they have to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the relevant local, regional and national planning policy documents and guidance"*

2.1.13 *Each village is distinctive in terms of the community, facilities and local character..... The local character of each is unique, recognisable and important to the community and to the character of the borough as a whole. In response to the Council's 'All in One' survey, which showed that residents had a desire to shape planning guidance for their local area, the Council is developing Village Planning Guidance in the form of Supplementary Planning Document (SPDs),...*

The Mens' Shed is very much a local community project for health and wellbeing. It is sponsored by the Barnes Community Association, with the help of funds from Richmond Council. It is just the sort of project that should be supported by the Council's planning policies, as the extracts above show. Given the support it has, it is a special case worthy of planning consent.

B 3. The Plan's Strategic vision

The Mens' Shed is also in line with the strategic vision and objectives of the Local Plan to ensure a high quality environment for the lifestyles of local people and a sustainable future.

2. *Richmond borough will be the best place in London to live as a result of the quality of the built environment which considers the health and wellbeing of local residents*

3. *Protect and improve the borough's parks and open spaces to provide a high quality environment for local communities and provide a balance between areas for quiet enjoyment and wildlife and areas to be used for sports, games and recreation.*

11. Create attractive and pleasant environments and spaces that promote active and healthy lifestyles, including recognising their benefits to residents' social life and their economic benefits to the borough's centres.

The Local Plan also seeks to meet people's needs in terms of social interaction, leisure, healthy lifestyle by ensuring there are facilities for this.

The Plan's strategic objectives as set out in the Plans Strategic Vision include the following which can be claimed to support the Mens' Shed.

Protecting Local Character - 3. *Protect and improve the borough's parks and open spaces to provide a high quality environment for local communities and provide a balance between areas for quiet enjoyment and wildlife and areas to be used for sports, games and recreation.*

The Mens' Shed is proposed for an obscured part of the Metropolitan Open Land. It is for recreation which the Local Plan espouses and it's design is to harmonise with the location. Its purpose is recreational for older people and therefore not of the running about type, but nonetheless for recreation.

Sustainable future - 1. *Minimise and mitigate the effects of climate change by requiring high levels of sustainable design and construction including reductions in carbon dioxide emissions by minimising energy consumption, promoting decentralised energy and the use of renewable energy as well as requiring high standards of water efficiency.*

The design of the Shed supports this sustainability objective in many ways which are detailed elsewhere in this report and other documents accompanying the application.

Land optimisation - 3. *Optimise the use of land and resources by ensuring new development takes place on previously developed land, reusing existing buildings and encouraging remediation and reuse of contaminated land.*

The proposed location of the Shed is on previously developed land, which is not so much brown, as black tarmac.

Sustainable transport - 6. *Promote safe and sustainable transport choices, including public transport, cycling and walking, for all people, including those with disabilities.*

The Shed would be in a location with excellent transport links including a bus route stopping at it. But because it is close to the centre of Barnes, users would walk or cycle.

Waste management - 8. *Promote sustainable waste management through minimising waste and providing sufficient land for the reuse, recycling and treatment of waste, and minimise the amount of waste going to landfill in line with the West London Waste Plan.*

The activities in the Shed would be minimising waste by maintaining and mending things for the Barnes community, the WWT and the playing fields, and making new items using recycled materials. Waste management will be combined with that of the Wetlands.

Healthy lifestyles - 11. *Create attractive and pleasant environments and spaces that promote active and healthy lifestyles, including recognising their benefits to residents' social life and their economic benefits to the borough's centres.*

The purpose of the Shed is to help primarily older residents to lead an active and physically and mentally healthy life.

Also in the Local Plan, along with the other key objectives of *Protecting Local Character* and a *Sustainable Future*, is *Meeting People's Needs*. Relevant to this application are:

Meeting People's Needs

1. *Ensure there is adequate provision of facilities for community and social infrastructure that are important for the quality of life of residents and securing new facilities and services that meet people's needs.*

8. *Encourage opportunities for leisure, entertainment, sport, cultural activity and the development of community life.*

12. *Encourage the creation of healthy environments and support healthy and active lifestyles, including through measures to reduce health inequalities. This includes ensuring there is an appropriate range of health facilities that meet local needs,*

13. *Promote inclusive and sustainable communities, social interaction, cohesive, healthy and dementia-friendly communities, and enable the older population to remain independent and active for longer.*

It is the purpose of the Mens' Shed to meet these needs by providing the social, leisure and cultural infrastructure to allow social interaction and cohesion, and to contribute to a and mentally and physically active, dementia avoiding community.

The Mens' Shed development is supportive of the Local Plan's strategic vision, as well as being supported by the local community, and this application merits sympathetic consideration.

B 4. The Local Plan's Spatial Strategy

There are five themes to the *Spatial Strategy*, *Protecting Local Character*, *A Sustainable Future*, *Meeting People's Needs*, *the Spatial Distribution of Development*, and *Strengthening Local Employment*. The first four are the most relevant to the Mens' Shed project.

The relevance of the Spatial Strategy of the Local Plan policy to the Mens' Shed is that one of the problems in trying to develop the Borough's Plan is a shortage of land as acknowledged below:

Theme one - *Protecting Local Character*

3.1.5 *The unique and locally distinctive historic and cultural environment as well as the protected parks and open spaces limit the opportunities for development and growth within the borough. The borough is constrained by its already developed areas, limited opportunities for redevelopment, large expanses of protected open space and by the River Thames and its flood plain.*

3.1.6 *The Spatial Strategy emphasises that local community needs, including delivery of housing and the infrastructure required to support it, are expected to be met without compromising the quality of the natural, built and historic environment.*

The objective is therefore to make provision for development without compromising the quality of the environment. If it is accepted that there is a need for a Mens' Shed, where better to locate it than on an existing private car park, screened by planting, where it can hardly be seen. It is akin to using a brown field site and is easily accessible to local residents by walking and cycling, all as advocated in the clause below.

3.1.14 *In order to achieve sustainable growth within the borough, future development is therefore expected to take place on brownfield sites. Improvements, such as enhancing the immediate environment, creating new pedestrian and cycling linkages, especially to and from as well as alongside the rivers, and other environmental enhancement will be sought.*

The site is next to the Wetlands. The Shed will not be detrimental to biodiversity, as the Biodiversity Report accompanying this planning application testifies. It was written by the WWT.

3.1.15 *Sites designated for their biodiversity and nature conservation value, including the connectivity between habitats will be protected and enhanced.*

In fact, the wildlife corridor will be enhanced by the users of the Shed. They will put in additional planting under the direction of the WWT, and the building will help shelter the corridor from the openness of the WWT car park.

In Barnes, there is no place for the Mens' Shed except on one of its large expanses of open space. It is inevitable that some planning policies will conflict and this project is an example. Land is protected, but community infrastructure is wanted. Fortunately, planning policies allow the Council to make exceptions.

The BCA believes that the proposed location of the Shed is worthy of support because with the unavailability of any other site, it will fulfil the need for community infrastructure yet will not compromise the quality of the environment. It is a special case and deserves being given planning consent.

Theme two - A Sustainable Future

The second theme is a *Sustainable Future* to which the Shed contributes by being a small, low environmental impact, wood building, of sustainable design, which will also contribute to biodiversity:

3.1.19 *To play our role in minimising and mitigating the effects of climate change, the Council will continue to require high levels of sustainable design and constructionincluding measures to minimise energy use, encouraging decentralised energy as well as renewable energy...*

3.1.20 *The Council will promote and encourage development to be fully resilient to the future impacts of climate change in order to minimise vulnerability of people and property. Development will need to be located and designed so it can adapt to and cope with the potential impacts and consequences of climate changealso includes ensuring that development is located away from areas considered to be at high risk of flooding, incorporating sustainable drainage wherever possible, ensuring the borough's green infrastructure network is maintained, which also contributes to ensuring that biodiversity can adapt to a changing climate, as well as protecting our water resources and water quality.*

The low impact design is detailed in other documents accompanying this planning application.

Because the proposed location is in an area of high flood risk, the Shed is raised off the car park tarmac on piers in case London's flood defences are breached. This is unlikely in the life time of the Shed – designed to be a temporary and moveable building anyway. The drainage arrangements are on sustainable guidelines and assisted by the provision for the London Wetlands.

The Mens' Shed does its best to contribute to a sustainable future and should be supported by the Council.

Theme three - Meeting People's Needs

The third theme is Meeting the needs of local people.

3.1.22 *The Council places high priority on the provision of community and social infrastructure, which is essential to support the projected population growth of the borough. Such facilities are often at the heart of local communities and they are important for the quality of life of residents. Community and social infrastructure facilities play an important role in creating more inclusive and sustainable communities and they help to promote social interaction as well as encouraging people to lead more healthy and active lives.*

Moreover, the policy is to work with local partners such as the BCA. The Mens' Shed also has a training role by being a facility in which older, experienced people can train younger ones.

3.1.23. *...The Council will work with partners to encourage the provision of facilities and services for education and training for all age groups to help reduce inequalities and support the local economy.....*

3.1.24 *The role of the voluntary and community sector will be essential to meeting peoples needs, in terms of their role as employers, in contributing to a sense of place, the development of communities and residents' health and well-being.*

The purpose of the Mens' Shed is to fulfil all these important Council planning policies relating to communities, health, wellbeing and helping older people remain active and independent. It can also be used as an extra facility in the Borough for training. It is a project deserving of planning consent.

Theme four - Spatial Distribution of Development

The spatial strategy is concerned with land use to support its policies. The Mens' Shed is aligned to many of the Council's planning policies and also needs to be cross referenced to the spatial strategy in creating a new facility to fulfil the policies.

3.1.25 *The Local Plan plays a crucial role in facilitating the creation of healthy environments and the Council promotes and supports healthy and active lifestyles, including measures to reduce health inequalities. The Spatial Strategy seeks to ensure that development results in patterns of land uses and facilities that make the healthy choice the most convenient and attractive option for residents, helping them to lead healthier lives more easily. The Council also supports the creation of environments and a public realm that are inclusive and accessible for the older population, including for those with dementia, and enable the older population to remain independent and active for longer.*

3.1.27 *Access to local community facilities, services, shops and meeting places such as community centres and local pubs is important in facilitating social interaction and general community wellbeing and happiness*

The plan has a great emphasis access to local centres, health and wellbeing which is what the Mens' Shed will provide. The Local Plan acknowledges below that there is a shortage of land for industrial type uses. The Mens' Shed is chiefly a workshop, and the only suitable land found for it has been the WWT car park.

3.1.34 *In relation to the borough's business parks, industrial estates and creative industries, it is acknowledged that the borough has a very limited supply of industrial floorspace and demand for this type of land is high.*

3.1.35 *Despite the constrained nature of the borough, there is a need to provide moreleisure and other community and infrastructure services The traditional village based structure will be maintained and reinforced with a range recreational activities, at the most local level possible, to reinforce community life, increase accessibility and reduce the need to travel.*

The shortage of land is not just for 'industrial' activities but also for leisure and other community services, especially to support villages. What better example of a Borough village than Barnes, and this project can show how the Council's policies can be fulfilled with flexible open minded approach.

Given that there is a shortage of land, this application for a much wanted and needed village community project has high merit because it is proposed for land located in the WWT car park where it will not be inappropriate nor harmful to the MOL.

B 5. Conclusion – The Plan's Strategic Context, Vision and Objectives

The Shed project is compatible with so much of Richmond's Local Plan strategy and is therefore a deserving project, proposed for an appropriate location.

The Local Plan makes clear the importance of

- quality of life of the residents
- quality of the beautiful Borough environment
- need for recreation
- need for healthy lifestyles
- need for facilities for all of this
- making best use of land for such facilities
- proximity of facilities to communities or good transport to them
- promoting sustainable communities
- working with local people
- providing for the needs of local people

For all these reasons, this planning application should be supported by the Richmond planning authority and serious consideration given to the weight of strategies with which the Shed is in harmony compared with the one concerning the MOL with which it might seem to be in conflict. The BCA believes there is no conflict because the development is very appropriate and not harmful.

Because the Mens' Shed is requested and needed, for all the above reasons, by a local community such as that represented by the Barnes Community Association, and the planning authority is allowed to make an exception for a special case, the BCA believes that this is definitely a special case, where the development is highly appropriate and there no harm done to the MOL.

SECTION C.

RICHMOND LOCAL PLAN – THE POLICIES

The policies below are those of the Richmond upon Thames Local Plan that are most relevant to the Mens' Shed planning application.

This report shows that the Mens' Shed project supports the relevant planning policies of Richmond except in respect of MOL policy. But a local planning authority is permitted to make exceptions to policies, as made clear earlier in the report, and this report makes the case for the Mens' Shed being a special one, given that it is not inappropriate and it supports the relevant policies.

Richmond's planning policies are set out below and the way in which the Shed supports them is explained. The argument is put forward that the project's support for so many of the relevant policies should be weighed in the balance against Policy LP13 for Green Belt and MOL.

The Mens' Shed support for so many of the Council's planning policies, along with all the detailed points below about each policy, is put forward as evidence that the Shed is not inappropriate, does no harm, and should be a special case if there is any policy conflict.

C 1. Policy LP1 – Local Character and Design Quality

Policy LP1 is to ensure any development is of a good, sustainable design that is sympathetic to the surrounding environment and contributes to the Borough being a nice and lovely place. It really applies to buildings constructed close to others rather than an isolated building like the proposed Mens' Shed. That does not mean that an isolated building should not also be of good design and fit in with its surroundings.

We understand good design to mean that a building looks good and functions well. Of course, what looks good is subjective. It is easier to agree on what looks ugly, terrible, disorganised, unsympathetic etc.

The most relevant parts of the LP1 policy are below.

Policy LP 1

Local Character and Design Quality

2. sustainable design and construction, including adaptability, subject to aesthetic considerations;

3. layout, siting and access, including making best use of land;

6. suitability and compatibility of uses, taking account of any potential adverse impacts of the co-location of uses through the layout, design and management of the site.

Design quality and character

4.1.3 This policy requires developers and applicants to take a sensitive approach to the architectural design of new buildings, extensions and modifications to existing buildings, as well as landscape proposals. The Council does not wish to encourage a particular architectural style or approach but expects each scheme to be to a high quality, with very high quality expected within Conservation Areas. Schemes

should be based on a sound understanding of the site and its context, following the locally specific guidance set out in the Village Planning Guidance SPDs.

Materials

4.1.5 The Council will expect the use of high quality materials and planting reflecting the local character and distinctiveness of an area in all schemes where this contributes positively to the appearance and character of an area

The design of the Mens' Shed takes account of the brief for it to be temporary and removeable, which requires it to be a lightweight building. Its form is generated by the function which requires volume inside for light workshop type purposes, good provision of north facing daylight, south facing pitched roof for solar panels and has to fit on a small site. The materials are timber, because it can be taken apart and reused as well as being capable of construction, repair and maintenance by local volunteers.

It is also intended to be of a low key appearance and fit in with its surroundings to comply with planning policies and because it is on MOL. It therefore takes inspiration from the forms of the WWT buildings – traditional pitched roof and glazed gables especially – and of agricultural building like traditional barns or other types of rural shed.

Co-location and compatibility

4.1.10 Proposals should demonstrate that the proposed uses and activities are suitable and compatible with each other and surrounding land uses. The Council will give consideration to the mix of uses proposed and how they will support and connect with the local area through the layout, design and management of the site.

4.1.11 Proposals should maximise the opportunities the site holds to generate a design, which will minimise its environmental impact and take account of micro-climates. Well informed design decisions at an early stage, such as the orientation of a building, can reduce energy consumption through responding positively to climatic conditions.

As a building that serves the activities of the Wetlands and Barn Elms playing fields and is easily accessible by the users who are local people, the location is an appropriate one making good use of the land in support of LP1, and we believe compatible with the MOL status because it fits in well, is screened and causes no harm.

C 2. Policy LP 5 – Views and Vistas

The term Metropolitan Open Land is a descriptive one. Richmond's policy seeks to maintain the openness and the views across to provide the Borough with a sense of spaciousness.

Policy LP 5

Views and Vistas

The Council will protect the quality of the views, vistas, gaps and the skyline, all of which contribute significantly to the character, distinctiveness and quality of the local and wider area, by the following means

2. resist development which interrupts, disrupts or detracts from strategic and local vistas, views, gaps and the skyline;

4. require development to respect the setting of a landmark, taking care not to create intrusive elements in its foreground, middle ground or background;

The Policies are concerned with protecting views, of which there are very important ones in the Borough, Richmond Hill being the most important. As the two paragraphs below say, the chance to improve views is welcomed. In fact, this happened some years ago at Barn Elms playing fields when the boarded fencing along Rocks Lane was replaced by an iron fence to provide excellent open views across the playing fields towards London.

4.5.1 The quality and character of the views and vistas as shown on the Policies Map will need to be protected. In addition, the Council will explore opportunities to create attractive new views and vistas.

4.5.2 The presence of a view or vista will influence the design quality, configuration, height and site layout of new development or extensions to existing developments.....Where appropriate, improvements, such as opening up or enhancing views for the benefit of the general public where views have been obscured by fencing, buildings or overgrown trees, will be encouraged.

However, such protection is not really relevant to the Mens' Shed. Where it is proposed to site the Mens' Shed, there are currently no open views over this part of the MOL. The view is blocked by trees, hedges, fences, and a high mound which was erected some two centuries ago over an ice house (and which probably should be protected and would therefore always block an open view).

It would anyway be counter-productive to open up the view across the proposed Shed site. The view would be of a tarmaced car park which anyway has planting around it to hide the cars. It is therefore better that the screening around the site be increased rather than any opening up occurring.

The Borough is proudly distinguished for having magnificent views from Richmond Hill, which are specifically and specially protected.

4.5.3 The Richmond, Petersham and Ham Open Spaces Act (1902) prevents development of the land on and below Richmond Hill in order to protect the unique and distinctive foreground views that it provides to the west and south. This is the only view in England to be protected by an Act of Parliament. In addition, the view from King Henry VIII's Mound to St Paul's Cathedral is the subject of a Direction made by the Secretary of State as part of strategic guidance and is one of eight such strategic views of St Paul's across London.

However, the site in question for this planning application does not have the views of Richmond Hill.

Policy LP5, Views and Vistas, might therefore seem irrelevant to the Mens' Shed planning application, but it is not. The relevance is that the policy is closely connected to the MOL Policy LP13 Green Belt and MOL., which also seeks to protect views, including those at Barn Elms.

Except, as already said, there are no views to protect nor ones to create at the location where the Mens' Shed is proposed. This reinforces the argument that the Mens' Shed, because of its obscured location in a tarmaced car park, is not harmful and should be regarded as a special case and given planning consent.

C 3. Policy LP 12 – Green Infrastructure

Policy LP 5 Green Infrastructure is to protect and improve or add to green space because of the benefits it gives to local people. Included in Green Infrastructure are District Parks which describe the Barn Elms/Wetlands MOL area.

Development is not ruled out because the policy states below how development is to be assessed.

Policy LP12

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green spaces and green features, which provides multiple benefits for people, nature and the economy.

A. To ensure all development proposals protect, and where opportunities arise enhance, green infrastructure, the following will be taken into account when assessing development proposals:

- a. the need to protect the integrity of the green spaces and features that are part of the wider green infrastructure network; improvements and enhancements to the green infrastructure network are supported;*
- b. its contribution to the wider green infrastructure network by delivering landscape enhancement, restoration or re-creation;*
- c. incorporating green infrastructure features, which make a positive contribution to the wider green infrastructure network.*

B. The hierarchy of open spaces, as set out in the table below, will be protected and used in accordance with the functions shown.

District Parks 20-60ha

Large areas of open space that provide a landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits as well as visual amenity.

The MOL is part of the green infrastructure, one of the purpose of which, the policy states, is to provide recreation. Generally, recreation is taken to mean walking and running and other sports, but for older people such recreation may no longer be possible. The Mens' Shed provides for their recreation and mental health and wellbeing. The Borough's planning policy needs to recognise this recreational need as the population ages, and it should not discriminate against older people and their needs. In Barnes, because there is no other land available, the need can be fulfilled on green land, which is dedicated to recreation amongst other things.

5.1.2 The green spaces and green features that contribute to and make up the overall green infrastructure network range from borough-wide and strategic features such as parks, watercourses, woodlands to local features such as playgrounds, sports pitches, allotments, public open spaces, trees, woodlands, private gardens and other green spaces used for recreational purposes.

5.1.4Green infrastructure can support healthier lifestyles by providing green routes for walking and cycling, and green spaces for recreation, exercise and play.

On a macro scale, the Mens' Shed is unable to contribute to improving the green infrastructure because it's proposed location is in the WWT car park. Although the Wetlands itself can be considered part of the green infrastructure, its car park can hardly be so described.

However, on the micro scale the Mens' Shed project will improve an unpromising car park situation by planting along its east and south borders to add 'green infrastructure' for wildlife. This will fortify a wildlife corridor between the Wetlands and the Barn Elms playing fields and the fishing lake.

The Men' Shed project therefore will enhance the green infrastructure rather than diminishing it, in support of LP 12. The development should be regarded as a positive development and special case for the proposed MOL location.

C 4. Policy LP 13 - Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land & Green space

In line with National Policy, Richmond also seeks to protect its Metropolitan Open Land for appropriate uses which include recreation and deter inappropriate development with Policy LP13.

Policy LP 13

Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Local Green Space

A. The borough's Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be protected and retained in predominately open use. Inappropriate development will be refused unless 'very special circumstances' can be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.

Appropriate uses within Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land include public and private open spaces and playing fields, open recreation and sport, Development will be supported if it is appropriate and helps secure the objectives of improving the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.

B. It will be recognised that there may be exceptional cases where inappropriate development, such as small scale structures for essential utility infrastructure, may be acceptable.

Protection was conceived as way of preventing urban sprawl, as stated below. Barnes is well protected from such a fate by having well defined green areas and boundaries.

5.2.1 The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.....This policy applies equally to Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.

Urban sprawl such as the building of a housing estate would be regarded as urban sprawl and inappropriate development. However, the policy carefully does not exclude any development at all in case there are exceptional circumstances.

5.2.4 There is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt or MOL, and inappropriate development by definition, is harmful to the Green Belt or MOL and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However, the policy also recognises that there may be exceptional cases where inappropriate development could be acceptable, such as small scale structures for essential utility infrastructure.

The Mens' Shed is small scale, serves the functions on the MOL and being largely concealed on the WWT car park, has negligible impact upon the MOL. It bears no relation to the urban sprawl for which Green Belt and MOL policies were originally designed.

The project will also enhance wildlife by planting out and caring for a wildlife corridor joining the Wetlands with the pond and playing fields on the other side of Queen Elizabeth's Walk, as encouraged by the paragraph below.

5.2.7Where possible, opportunities to increase the Green Belt's or MOL's potential for wildlife should be maximised

The Mens' Shed is appropriate for the MOL because it will serve the needs of the activities on the MOL, namely maintaining, mending and making replacement or new items in use by WWT and Barn Elms Sports Trust. The other buildings, the pavilions and changing rooms and the WWT buildings are on the MOL because they too support the activities there.

In addition, the Shed provides recreational activity for the people of Barnes in support of mental health. The Shed also can provide education and skills training even for schools.

It is therefore appropriately located for good access for its purposes. In fact, even after an exhaustive investigation over time by the BCA, there is no other suitable place in Barnes.

Given all the various planning policies it supports, there are very special circumstances involved in the application because its benefits mean so much to the local community. Granting consent for it will not urban sprawl or any development. The BCA believes the Shed is not inappropriate nor harmful to the MOL, but should anyway be considered as a very special case.

C 5. Policy LP 15 – Biodiversity

Policy LP15 for Biodiversity is supported by the Mens' Shed and not adversely affected, as is set out in the detailed Biodiversity report that accompanies this planning application. Summary comments on Biodiversity are below.

Policy LP 15

Biodiversity

A. The Council will protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity, in particular, but not exclusively, the sites designated for their biodiversity and nature conservation value, including the connectivity between habitats..... This will be achieved by:

- 1. protecting biodiversity in, and adjacent to, the borough's designated sites for biodiversity and nature conservation importance (including buffer zones), as well as other existing habitats and features of biodiversity value;*
- 2. supporting enhancements to biodiversity;*
- 4. ensuring new biodiversity features or habitats connect to the wider ecological and green infrastructure networks and complement surrounding habitats;*
- 5. enhancing wildlife corridors for the movement of species, including river corridors, where opportunities arise; and*
- 6. maximising the provision of soft landscaping, including trees, shrubs and other vegetation that support the borough-wide Biodiversity Action Plan.*

The Local Plan Biodiversity policy is to protect and enhance Biodiversity. The proposed site for the Mens' Shed is a tarmaced car park which supports no biodiversity. However, the car park is between two green areas – the Wetlands and Barn Elm's playing fields. Beside the proposed site is a young hedge which can be enhanced as a wildlife 'corridor' between these two areas. Mammals use this corridor at night at ground level and bats, owls and other birds at high level.

The land belongs to the WWT and under its direction, the volunteers using the Shed will do what is advised – like more planting or ditching - to enhance this 'corridor'. They will also improve the screening on the south side of the Shed as directed by WWT.

5.4.4 BiodiversityIn addition, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including the provision of new habitats and features,

5.4.7 the Council expects developments to incorporate new biodiversity features and habitats into the design of buildings themselves as well as in appropriate design and landscaping schemes of new and/or redevelopments (including surrounding areas where appropriate) with the aim to attract wildlife and promote biodiversity where possible. Therefore, proposals should seek to include:

- *improved links between existing sites;*
- *new biodiversity features within development; and*
- *securing management for long term enhancement.*

Bird and bat boxes which will be made by the Shed users, will be fixed to the building. And there are also holes in the gables of the roofs for owls to use. Bats and

The construction of the Shed must not be allowed to affect the existing 'corridor'. The Shed site is 2m from the eastern boundary (with the WWT overflow car park) where the wildlife corrido is. During construction hard protection will be sited between the Shed and the boundary to provide protection. It is likely that the Shed will be factory made rather than made on site by BCA volunteers. The factory made will easily erected and joined thus minimising potential disruption to the 'corridor'.

The Shed development will enhance biodiversity within an otherwise sterile car park, not be detrimental to it, thus supporting the LP15 planning policy. This is another reason for the planning application to be considered favourably.

C 6. Policy LP 16 – Trees, Woodlands, and Landscape

Policy LP15 for Trees, Woodlands and Landscape is only relevant to the Mens' Shed development with regard to the landscape part of the policy, because there are no trees on the site – only young hedges.

Policy LP 16

Trees, Woodlands and Landscape

A. *The Council will require the protection of existing trees and the provision of new trees, shrubs and other vegetation of landscape significance that complement existing, or create new, high quality green areas, which deliver amenity and biodiversity benefits.*

Landscape

3. *encourage planting, including new trees, shrubs and other significant vegetation where appropriate.*

It is proposed to add more plants along the eastern boundary (with the WWT overflow car park) to enhance the wildlife corridor, and more along the southern boundary (with Queen Elizabeth's Walk) to densify it.

By enhancing the landscape in this way, the Mens' Shed will be supporting the planning policy LP16 and improving the MOL.

C 7. Policy LP 17 – Green Roofs and Walls

Policy LP 17 for Green Roofs and Walls cannot be used by the design of the Mens' Shed. The project will enhance biodiversity but not by the use of green roof or walls. The roof is pitched at too steep an angle and the walls are wood. But other features have been incorporated to enhance biodiversity.

Policy LP 17

Green roofs and walls

Green roofs and/or brown roofs should be incorporated into new major developments with roof plate areas of 100sqm or more where technically feasible and subject to considerations of visual impact. The aim should be to use at least 70% of any potential roof plate area as a green / brown roof.

The onus is on an applicant to provide evidence and justification if a green roof cannot be incorporated. The Council will expect a green wall to be incorporated, where appropriate, if it has been demonstrated that a green / brown roof is not feasible.

The use of green / brown roofs and green walls is encouraged and supported in smaller developments, renovations, conversions and extensions.

The roof is designed to maximise solar energy collection. It has an angle of 36° and is fitted with 38m² of solar panels. On the south side, there are rooflights to provide daylight. This rules out green roofs.

5.6.1 Green roofs are an essential sustainable design consideration and can take many forms in order to maximise their benefits in a given location. Vegetated roofs have many benefits, including the following:

- *enhancement of biodiversity and provision of important refuges for wildlife in urban areas;*
- *provision of green space and potentially accessible roof space;*

5.6.9 The use of green roofs and green walls in smaller developments, renovations, conversions, extensions and retrofitting is encouraged and supported, where opportunities arise.

Green walls are also not possible because The Shed needs to be a removeable and so lightweight building with the timber framed walls clad with timber. This is because the brief called for a temporary removeable building. There is no large expanse for a green wall because the walls have large sliding door openings in them and there is a likelihood of decay by attaching a green wall to the timber one. And a barn like rural appearance fits in with the surroundings.

The Shed compensates for not having green roof and walls by providing wide eaves for house martins, and bird boxes, bat boxes and owl lofts as far as providing for biodiversity goes. As far as environmental control goes, other passive cooling measures included in the design will help to combat overheating heat and support policy LP17.

C 8. Policy LP 20 – Climate Change Adaption

Policy LP20 - Climate Change Adaption has been taken into account and is supported by the Mens' Shed design in respect of higher temperatures, increased rainfall and flooding. It also contributes to reducing climate change by its energy, construction, operational and flood strategy.

Policy LP 20

Climate Change Adaption

A. The Council will promote and encourage development to be fully resilient to the future impacts of climate change in order to minimise vulnerability of people and property.

B. New development, in their layout, design, construction, materials, landscaping and operation, should minimise the effects of overheating as well as minimise energy consumption in accordance with the following cooling hierarchy:

The brief required a building that was temporary and could be moved. This meant a lightweight building made of wood that could be dis-assembled and moved. A traditional cooling strategy based on a heavy weight building using thermal mass was ruled out. But other passive design measures like orientation, natural ventilation and stack effect, daylighting, insulation etc have been employed. And of course construction is from a renewable and reusable material – timber.

6.1.7 Adaptation to higher temperatures should be considered from the outset, not added as an afterthought and new developments should therefore take into account the following:

- *Passive design*
- *Orientation*
- *The use of light coloured materials on the exterior of buildings can help minimise the need for artificial cooling*
- *Use of advanced glazing systems to reduce solar heat gain.*
- *Cool roofs, including white roofs, built from materials with high solar reflectance, absorb and store less solar energy during the day and thus are not major emitters of heat at night.*
- *Surfacing material with high solar reflectivity and good water permeability can be a very effective way of reducing high urban temperatures.*
- *Materials to prevent penetration of heat, including use of cool building materials and green roofs and walls.*

Other cooling strategies like green roof could not be used because a pitched roof is needed for solar panels and daylighting. A green wall is also not sensible with wooden walls. The reports accompanying this application give details of all the measures taken for a low energy and naturally cooled building. Adaption to flooding risk is also dealt with in the accompanying reports and under Policy LP21 below.

The climate change adaption measures of the Mens' Shed design, supports the LP 20 policy, as it does many other policies, and is not inappropriate for the grant of planning consent.

C 9. Policy LP 21 – Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage

Policy LP21 is supported by the Mens' Shed by raising it off the ground and using the various hierarchies of drainage. A separate Flood Risk Assessment document accompanies this planning application.

Policy LP 21

Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage

A. All developments should avoid, or minimise, contributing to all sources of flooding, including fluvial, tidal, surface water, groundwater and flooding from sewers, taking account of climate change and without increasing flood risk elsewhere.....

The site proposed for the Mens' Shed is in Flood Zone 3, as is most of Barnes. The likelihood of flooding is very low but the design supports the policy by raising the Shed by a minimum of 300mm as required below by the policy. It is also raised for the additional reason that it is a removeable temporary building and lifting access underneath is needed.

6.2.6 Redevelopment of existing developed sites will only be supported if there is a net flood risk reduction. Net flood risk reduction includes both on- and off-site measures, including reducing the land use vulnerability, raising of floor levels, reduction in run-off, increasing flood storage capacity, reduced impedance to flood water flow and the incorporation of flood resilient and/or resistant measures. Finished floor levels are to be raised to a minimum of 300mm above the 1 in 100 fluvial or 1 in 200 tidal flood level (whichever is greater), including an allowance for climate change, as recommended in the Council's SFRA, or to the maximum acceptable height possible below this, should sufficient justification be provided.

Opportunities to restore the functional floodplain to its original state / condition are encouraged and will be supported.

The Barn Elms playing fields already exists as a flood plain, but water has not yet risen so far as to flood the proposed Shed site. If it ever should, raising the Shed off the ground, and the other measures taken, will protect the project.

6.2.8 Flood risk assessments (FRA) will be required in line with national policy and guidance.

A Flood Risk assessment has been undertaken as required and is included with other documents for this planning application.

6.2.18 Flood resilient and resistant measures should be incorporated into the design of development proposals in any area susceptible to flooding to minimise and manage the risk of flooding

Resilience and resistant measures have been included in the design of the Shed. These are detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment. The risks from flooding are normally negligible to low except if a combination of unlikely events occur at the same time. In which case the resilience measures of a raised Shed and closing the Shed to users, will eliminate residual risk.

6.2.22 to reduce the risk of surface water and sewer flooding, all development proposals in the Borough that could lead to changes to, and have impacts on, surface water run-off are required to follow the London Plan drainage hierarchy:

The design for the Mens' Shed includes storage of rain water in water butts for later use and discharge away from the tarmac car park onto the adjacent overflow field. Excess will be channelled to the Wetlands on the north side and to the fishing lake on the south side Queen Elizabeth's Walk. Any additional rainwater will naturally discharge onto the playing fields in the direction of Beverley Brook.

The most likely highest risk would be unusually high flooding from a combination of flooding events that could fill the Barn Elms playing fields and cross the road into the WWT car park. If this happened the site would be closed and there would be no risk to people but the Shed and its contents would be preserved by it being raised 300mm above the ground level and having all electric sockets installed at worktop height.

The proposed Mens' Shed has been design to take into account it's location. It supports the planning policy LP 21 and is therefore appropriate for the flood risk and sustainable drainage.

C 10. Policy LP 22 – Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy LP22 is another one very much supported by the design of the Mens' Shed to avoid being inappropriate in all aspects. The Council asks new developments to achieve BREEAM 'excellent' standard but it is difficult for the particular development that the Shed is, to do this due to its temporary nature and construction type and use.

The design goes as far as it can to reach the targets. Details of the measures are included in the documents accompanying this planning application. The documents are:

- BREEAM Pre-Assessment
- Energy and Sustainability Statement
- Sustainable Construction Checklist (it is Appendix C in Energy & Sustainability Statement)
- Design & Access Statement

Policy LP 22

Sustainable Design and Construction

A. *Developments will be required to achieve the highest standards of sustainable design and construction to mitigate the likely effects of climate change.*

3. *New non-residential buildings over 100sqm will be required to meet BREEAM 'Excellent' standard.*

Reducing Carbon Dioxide Emissions

B. *Developers are required to incorporate measures to improve energy conservation and efficiency as well as contributions to renewable and low carbon energy generation.*

3. *All non-residential buildings over 100sqm should achieve a 35% reduction. From 2019 all major non-residential buildings should achieve zero carbon standards in line with London Plan policy.*

Targets are expressed as a percentage improvement over the target emission rate (TER) based on Part L of the 2013 Building Regulations.

C. *This should be achieved by following the Energy Hierarchy:*

- 1. Be lean: use less energy*
- 2. Be clean: supply energy efficiently*
- 3. Be green: use renewable energy*

The planning policy requires new developments to be as sustainable as possible. The Shed goes as far as it can in support of this for the type of building it is. It will not require either the new or recycled aggregates referred to by the policy because its construction material is wood, which is more sustainable.

In order to minimise the consumption of resources, as required by the policy, the Shed is to be constructed either using a pre-fabricated factory made system or by volunteers using as many second hand materials as possible.

6.3.1 This policy seeks to ensure that all new development and refurbishment is as sustainable as possible in order to mitigate the impact of development on the environment. All new buildings should be built to a standard which minimises the consumption of resources during construction and occupation and the use of recycled or secondary aggregates in construction is encouraged where suitable.

The Council's Sustainable Construction Checklist for the Mens' Shed and an Energy Statement is included with this planning application as part of the Energy and Sustainability Statement.

6.3.2 The Council's Sustainable Construction Checklist SPD will be applied to development Applicants are required to submit an Energy Statement to show how the requirements of the themes within the Checklist have been met within the proposed new development.

The Mens' Shed passes the Council's required as measured by the checklist.

Water efficiency

6.3.3 New developments, in their design, landscaping, construction and operation, should incorporate measures to avoid water wastage.

6.3.5 A minimum of 2 credits on water consumption will be required to achieve BREEAM "excellent". Where a BREEAM assessment is not technically feasible, applicants should incorporate best practice water saving and recycling measures as outlined in the Sustainable Construction Checklist SPD.

However, the Pre-Assessment shows that Shed will achieve 3 out of 6 BREEAM credits for water consumption. The Pre-Assessment has assumed that no grey water system will be installed because the investment will not be worth it for a temporary building. On this basis the Shed will better the Council's target and achieve 3 credits. However, it is intended that volunteers will help build the Shed and will install a grey water system. Up to 6 credits are achievable for the Shed.

6.3.6 A number of water saving measures and equipment may be incorporated into developments to comply with the maximum water consumption levels.....:

- *There should be full use of water saving devices, water efficient fixtures and fittings.*
- *Rainwater and grey water recycling (water butts or more complex collection and treatment systems) can significantly reduce water consumption, particular potable water. Grey water recycling will need to be energy efficient.*
- *Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), including rainwater harvesting and storage from roofs and other surfaces can significantly reduce demand for water.*

The Mens' Shed include, internally, water saving features are included as follows:

- WC 3.75 litres flush
- Basin taps 5 litres per min
- Kitchen taps 6 litres per min
- No dishwasher
- Limited to 105 litres day per person (after grey water rainwater systems).

Externally, water saving feature are:

- Rainwater harvested for grey water use and cleaning tools and equipment.
- Water butts also collect water for the planting around the site.
- Drainage

Reducing carbon dioxide emissions

6.3.9 All development proposals should apply the following Energy Hierarchy:

1. First, an efficient design to minimise the amount of energy use and developments. Energy use in new development can be reduced by appropriate siting, design, landscaping and energy efficiencies within the building,..... All new developments are required to conform to the Sustainable Construction Checklist. New developmentswill be expected to achieve high environmental standards. Designing for minimum energy use and reducing predicted site CO2 emissions should be addressed in an energy statement.

3. Finally, where feasible and viable, a contribution from renewable sources should be included.

The design of the Mens' Shed does it's utmost to reduce CO2 emissions by just the sort of passive design measures and other on the Sustainable Construction Checklist required by the Local Plan policies. An Energy and Sustainability Report accompanying this planning application gives details of the measure.

6.3.10 The Council will require an assessment of energy demand and carbon dioxide emissions from the proposed development, which should demonstrate the expected energy and emissions savings from energy efficiency and renewable energy measures incorporated into the development. renewable technologies such as photovoltaic cells, solar panels, ground and air source heat pumps and other forms of renewable energy may be appropriate in many parts of the borough, subject to other policies within this Plan.

6.3.11 The Energy Statement must demonstrate how the energy requirements will be met in line with the Energy Hierarchy.

Renewable energy in the form of 51m2 of solar panels is included in the design, generating 7,770kWh/year and resulting in a reduction of just over 4,000tonnes of CO2/yr, and offsetting more than 10% of proposed building CO2 emissions.

An Energy Statement with Passive Design analysis, accompanies this planning application.

6.3.14 The Council recognises that there may be instances where it is not technically feasible for a development to achieve a 35% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions over Building Regulations (2013). In such cases an applicant will have to demonstrate and set out clearly in the Energy Statement why the carbon dioxide emissions reduction target cannot be met on-site.

A ground source heat pump cannot be considered for this project because the ground belongs to the WWT and cannot be dug up for coils and neither can an air source heat pump which creates noise - also not desirable for the proposed site – and cannot provide the instantaneous heat needed for the Shed design.

The capital cost of installing all energy saving measures would work out at about £230k over 60 years for savings of about over £110k. This is beyond the budget for the Shed.

Nevertheless, the proposed design will still meet the 35% CO2 reduction target required by the Council.

The documents accompanying this planning application detail the measures including

- Lower U values than required for insulation of fabric and double glazing with Low E coating.
- Design air infiltration 5m3/hr/m2
- Daylighting from many north facing rooflights provide good task lighting and replace the need for electric lighting.
- All electric light to be low energy LED .
- Daylight sensors to automatically turn lights on and off lights.
- No external lighting to be installed to have no light pollution for wildlife
- Local point of use instantaneous electric water heaters
- Electric heating with fast response controls

- Smart meter
- Openable windows & rooflights, louvred windows and trickle vents for natural ventilation
- Mechanical ventilation only from WCs & kitchen as required by Building Regs.
- Blinds to prevent overheating (and also glare)
- Low number of people using the building – probably 5 to 10 people at any one time.

The Policy requirements are summarised below. These are met by the Mens' Shed except the requirement for BREEAM excellent which very difficult to achieve for a project like the Shed. The Local Plan does allow exceptions.

Summary of requirements

6.3.24 The table below summarises the sustainable design and construction standards that must be met for different types of developments

New non-residential buildings, including extensions, over 100sqm floorspace

- BREEAM 'Excellent'
- 35% reduction in CO2 emissions over Building Regulations (2013)
- Submit energy statement
- Submit Sustainable Construction Checklist

The Mens' Shed goes the extra mile to support all the energy and sustainability ambitions and requirements of the Council. The exception is the BREEAM excellent standard which for various practical reasons cannot be reached. Only with a very large budget might the standard be higher but it is not going to happen for a charitable community project like this. All things would be possible, but no one would consider them worthwhile for a temporary moveable building.

Considering all things, the Mens' Shed will go a long way to be a sustainable development and support LP 22, but it will never reach BREEAM excellent. Many of the BREEAM excellent standards relate to administrative and procedural issues and not to the environmental performance of the building. It would be unreasonable for a very small charitable community project to be treated as equal to a fully resourced large commercial development. The BCA understands that it is not unusual for some projects to meet the excellent standard and requests that special consideration be given to this application.

C 11. Policy LP 28 – Social and Community Infrastructure

Policy LP28 aims to support social and community infrastructure which is completely aligned with the purpose of the Men's Shed.

Policy LP 28

A. The Council will work with service providers and developers to ensure the adequate provision of community services and facilities, especially in areas where there is an identified need or shortage.

B. Proposals for new or extensions to existing social and community infrastructure will be supported where:
1. it provides for an identified need;

3. where practicable is provided in multi-use, flexible and adaptable buildings or co-located with other social infrastructure uses which increases public access.

C. Loss of social or community infrastructure will be resisted. . Proposals involving the loss of such infrastructure will need to demonstrate clearly:

2. that the existing facilities are being adequately re-provided in a different way or elsewhere in a convenient alternative location accessible to the current community it supports....

The great importance attached to community infrastructure is stressed by the policy's resistance to losing any such community facilities and requiring re-provision elsewhere.

The Mens' Shed proposes a new facility which should be welcomed by the Borough as suggested by the extracts from the policy reproduced below. These emphasise the importance of community facilities and the desire to gain some, not lose any.

***8.1.1** The provision of adequate community and social infrastructure is essential to support the projected population growth within the borough. Such facilities are often at the heart of local communities; they are important for the quality of life of residents, in the creation of more inclusive and sustainable communities and in helping to promote social interaction and encouraging people to lead more healthy and active lives.*

***8.1.2** This policy covers any type of social and community infrastructure floorspace that is important to the local community. It encompasses a wide range of services, Others are non-statutory community services such as cultural, play, recreation, sports and faith facilities including those for voluntary or charitable purposes. The Council considers it important to protect such uses and facilities as they play a key role in maintaining and fostering community and social cohesion. Some examples of social and community infrastructure include, social clubs, indoor sport and recreation facilities ...*

***8.1.3** More specific requirements for community facilities may be identified by local communities, for example as part of the Village Planning process or within a Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will work with partners including public and private infrastructure providers and the community and voluntary sector in ensuring the provision of services.*

***8.1.4** It is recognised that in some instances there may need to be some additional development to support the cost of retaining or re-providing existing social infrastructure uses. Such development may be acceptable provided that the proposal will result in an overall improvement to the existing social and community facilities and services.*

***8.1.5** Provision of good quality social and community infrastructure is critical for social cohesion and contributes to the creation of lifetime neighbourhoods, i.e. places where people are able to live and work in safe, healthy, supportive and inclusive environments with which they are proud to identify. The Council will support the provision of new or extensions to existing social infrastructure where it provides for an identified need...*

Access is considered important. For the proposed Shed there is excellent access for the Barnes community with buses, cycling walking and parking, if it is necessary for a vehicle to be used.

***8.1.7** Access for all is important including for the young, old and disabled.....Smaller facilities serving a more local catchment should be accessible by walking or cycling.*

Barn Elms playing fields are used by local schools. The Mens' Shed can similarly be used for learning technical skills, such as electronics, either during the day or after school. Such arrangements might suit those children less interested in sports activities. Parking is available and there would be no disturbance to neighbours.

8.1.8. The Council will encourage and promote the multi-use of premises, including in independent and free schools and other private or commercial facilities for sports and community purposes, subject to appropriate management arrangements and community use agreements. The combined impact of multi-use facilities needs to be taken into account, including shared parking, hours of use, and the impact these may have on the character and amenity of the area, the living conditions of local residents,

The shortage of land is acknowledged by the local plan and so any potential land for community facilities like the site proposed for the Mens' Shed should not be easily dismissed.

8.1.9it can be difficult to find new sites for community use, especially for use by voluntary groups.....Consequently, the potential of re-using, refurbishing or redeveloping existing sites for continued social or community infrastructure use must be assessed in order to preserve a sufficient range and amount of such infrastructure across the Borough.

Richmond's Local Plan recognises that communities cannot only express an opinion on how land is used, but nominate uses.

8.1.14 Community groups have a right to nominate buildings or other land as Assets of Community Value where they believe they are of importance to their community's social well-being.... If the asset comes up for sale, then the community will be given six months to make a bid to buy it on the open market.

The WWT site proposed for the Mens' Shed is not available for sale, but in the case of this planning application, the community has decided it would like to use the WWT site. Here is another example of local policies in conflict with MOL policy. But it shows that if the Shed project is compatible with Richmond planning policies, the planning application for it deserves planning consent.

The planning authority has to weigh benefits of the Shed against any detriment to MOL. The MOL policy is not fixed in stone. The Council has the ability to depart from existing policy if minded to do so in order to help the Shed support much needed policy LP 28.

C 12. Policy LP 29 – Education

Policy LP29 Stresses support for facilities for education and training. The Mens' Shed is primarily for the use of older men but should also be considered as a facility that can be used to train younger people.

Policy LP 29

Education and Training

A. The Council will work with partners to encourage the provision of facilities and services for education and training of all age groups to help reduce inequalities and support the local economy, by the following means:

3. identifying new sites for educational uses as part of this Plan; the Council will work with landowners and developers to secure sites

5. encouraging flexible and adaptable buildings, multi-use and co-location with other social infrastructure.

In the Local Plan, policies for Education are probably thinking about new schools, colleges and training places within what might be thought of as the normal/formal educational system. etc. However, the policies below are equally applicable to the Mens' Shed as regards community infrastructure.

8.1.5 *Provision of good quality social and community infrastructure is critical for social cohesion and contributes to the creation of lifetime neighbourhoods, i.e. places where people are able to live and work in safe, healthy, supportive and inclusive environments with which they are proud to identify. The Council will support the provision of new or extensions to existing social infrastructure where it provides for an identified need.*

8.1.6 *Need is identified on an evidential basis from the Council and its partners strategies and plans, including:*

- *Other local evidence such as community needs identified as part of the Village Planning process or Neighbourhood Plans.*

8.1.7 *Access for all is important including for the young, old and disabled..... Smaller facilities serving a more local catchment should be accessible by walking or cycling. The Council will encourage high quality and sustainable design of social infrastructure including measures to improve its actual, and perception of, accessibility.*

8.1.8 *Where practicable, social infrastructure and community facilities shouldco-located with other social infrastructure uses..... Community use could be individuals, sports and arts clubs, voluntary sector groups or private groups, and can range from informal/occasional bookings through to planned, professional activity.*

The policies are designed to encourage community and social integration and have them in places which are easily accessible and are very close to other facilities. This aim is met by the Mens' Shed because it is easily accessible and co-located with Barn Elms and the Wetlands.

8.2.14 *The Council will promote local employment opportunities and training programmes, particularly where there are opportunities arising from developments. Securing the skills to support residents into sustainable employment is a key priority for the Council..... The construction phase of new development provides opportunities for local employment, apprenticeships and work experience placements.*

The Shed can be a useful facility for skills training where older people can train younger ones. And its very construction could give an opportunity for practice as suggested by this policy.

This is another example of the Shed project being compatible with Richmond planning policies, in this case LP 29 and the planning application for it deserving planning consent

C 13. Policy LP 30 – Health and Wellbeing

Policy LP 30 for Health and Wellbeing stress the use of land for and access to local facilities that will support the health and wellbeing of communities including the older population. Dementia is specifically mentioned. The Mens' Shed is for health and wellbeing.

Policy LP 30

Health and Wellbeing

Planning, at all levels, can play a crucial role in creating environments that enhance people's health and wellbeing. The Council promotes and supports healthy and active lifestyles and measures to reduce health inequalities.

A. The Council will support development that results in a pattern of land uses and facilities that encourage:

3. Access to local community facilities, services and shops which encourage opportunities for social interaction and active living, as well as contributing to dementia-friendly environments.

6. An inclusive development layout and public realm that considers the needs of all, including the older population and disabled people.

7. Active Design which encourages wellbeing and greater physical movement as part of everyday routines.

The Richmond Local Plan recognises that there is a need for older people to be active and for land to be devoted to such use. More attention should be given to their needs in order to promote mental and physical health.

8.3.2 The planning system plays an important role in influencing the built and natural environment and therefore plays a key role in the physical and mental wellbeing of the population.

8.3.3 Healthy and active people tend to be less dependent on health and social care services so there are tangible economic benefits in encouraging and making it easy for the population to lead healthy lifestyles.

8.3.4 Planning can play a part in facilitating the creation of healthy environments. Development should result in a pattern of land uses and facilities that make the healthy choice the most convenient and attractive option for residents, helping them to lead healthier lives more easily.

8.3.7 Access to local community facilities, services, shops and meeting places such as community centres and local pubs is important in facilitating social interaction and general community wellbeing and happiness.

8.3.9 The borough has the highest proportion of people aged over 75 and living alone in London and there are increasing numbers of older people living at home with long term physical and mental conditions such as dementia. Planning can play a role in the creation of environments and a public realm that are inclusive and accessible for the older population, including for those with dementia.

8.3.10 Design of the built environment should specifically consider the needs of the older populationA high quality, inclusive and accessible urban environment will enable the older population to remain independent and active for longer, thereby reducing the need for extensive adaptations to buildings.

A prime purpose of the Mens' Shed is to keep older people physically and mentally active. It will fully support the policy set out above. This should be a most important factor when considering the planning application and weighing it in the balance against MOL policy.

The BCA believes not just that the development is appropriately located for the community, but that the health and wellbeing effect of the Shed makes this planning application a very special case.

C 14. Policy LP 44 & LP 45 – Sustainable Travel Choices and Parking

Policies LP44 and LP45 for Sustainable Travel Choices and Parking are supported by the Mens' Shed. The proposed location has good public transport links and most users will walk or cycle via a relatively safe route.

Policy LP 44

Sustainable Travel Choices

The Council will work in partnership to promote safe, sustainable and accessible transport solutions, which minimise the impacts of development including in relation to congestion, air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions, The Council will:

A. Location of development

Encourage high trip generating development to be located in areas with good public transport with sufficient capacity,

B. Walking and cycling

Ensure that new development is designed to maximise permeability within and to the immediate vicinity of the development site through the provision of safe and convenient walking and cycling routes, and to provide opportunities for walking and cycling, including through the provision of links and enhancements to existing networks.

C. Public transport

Ensure that major new developments maximise opportunities to provide safe and convenient access to public transport services

The Council's stated aim is to minimise the effect of congestion and air pollution arising from new developments.

Location of development

11.1.1. Whilst in general higher PTALs are achieved in areas with good rail/tube connections, in this borough it is recognised that bus links also contribute to levels of accessibility.

As far as the proposed location for the Shed goes the location is very good because it is close to where the users live so that they can walk or cycle and it is also served by bus routes, one of which goes into the site.

Walking, cycling and public transport

11.1.4 Developments should encourage the use of modes other than the car by making it as easy as possible through provision of good pedestrian facilities, clear layout and signage, provision of cycling facilities and improving access to public transport interchanges

All three modes, walking, cycling, and public transport are available and are the most likely travel options. Because the proposed site is at the London Wetlands, there is good signage and plentiful storage for bicycles. Three further stands to lock bikes to, will be provided beside the Shed.

Policy LP 45

Parking Standards and Servicing

The Council will require new development to make provision for the accommodation of vehicles in order to provide for the needs of the development while minimising the impact of car based travel including on the operation of the road network and local environment, and ensuring making the best use of land. It will achieve this by:

1. Requiring new development to provide for car, cycle, 2 wheel and, where applicable, lorry parking and electric vehicle charging points,

There will be provision for storing cycles as stated above. Car parking is not really going to be encouraged but inevitably Shed users will need to transport materials and items for repair. Two car parking spaces will be provided and there is room for a third. In exceptional circumstances the nearest WWT parking bays can be used.

One of the parking bays will have an electric vehicle charging point.

There is additionally space for van and lorry parking for the delivery of materials.

The location of the Mens' Shed is ideal for walking, cycling, buses and, if necessary, car parking. The Shed will add hardly anything to pollution and it complies very well with Richmond's transport planning policy.

The Shed development has a very good location as far as the transport goes. The development supports the policy LP 44 and LP45 as few other developments would. It is an appropriate location and a planning application that is worthy of consent.

C 15. Conclusion – the Policies of the Local Plan

The forgoing text demonstrates that of nearly all the Local Plan policies that are relevant to this project, the Mens' Shed will be supporting them. There would seem to be one main conflict with regard to Policy LP 13 for Green Belt and MOL. The BCA maintains that there actually is no conflict because the Shed is in an appropriate location and is not at all harmful to the MOL.

The Mens' Shed is appropriate development because:

- it serves the purposes of the activities on the MOL land by repairing and maintaining items used on the playfields and their pavilions and the Wetlands
- it provides a facility for recreation that will be taken by the older residents of Barnes, which is a use activity already established on the MOL
- planning policies should not discriminate against older people by denying them appropriate recreational facilities
- it is on an unused part of already developed land which is tarmac
- it is supported by the Barnes Community Association, Richmond Council and other local organisations and could be brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order were it not urgently needed already
- it has a very small number of users who will be insignificant compared with the number of people and their cars and coaches who use the rest of the MOL for sport, walking, cycling or visiting the Wetlands
- for those users not walking nor cycling, it is very convenient for transport with several bus routes within 200 metres and one route even coming into the site
- it's location is obscured and does not in any way affect the openness of the land
- it's small size and it's style, fit in with the 'country' aesthetic and existing WWT facilities which therefore reduces visual impact
- in principle it is supported by virtually all of Council's relevant planning policies

- in principle, it is also in line with other national planning policies, like supporting local communities and their well being
- planning policies specifically state that there can be exceptions to already implemented policies
- after searching for other sites, the proposed site is the only one available in Barnes
- planning policies inevitably to some extent conflict with each other and the planning authority can take a wide view for the benefit of a community

The BCA's requests that the Planning Committee and the Planning Inspectorate take especial note of:

- the importance of LP 28 Social and Community Infrastructure and LP 30 Health and Wellbeing for this project
- the comments this report make about LP 13 Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Green Space
- the powers given by the NPPF to local authorities to apply tests of reasonableness and to deviate from, and make exceptions to, existing policies.

The BCA's analysis of the planning situation gives it confidence to request that this application be granted consent.

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Aug 2020