



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed Extension to Existing Sand Arena

Ham Polo Club, Petersham Road, Petersham, Richmond, TW10 7AH

This design and access statement is to accompany a planning application for an extension to the existing sand arena at Ham Polo Club, as detailed on the accompanying drawings and reports.

Background

The site refers to Ham Polo Club, which consists of a polo field, equestrian track and various buildings associated with the use of the club such as stables, offices and club house. To the North West of the site there is an existing sand arena which is enclosed by a timber fence. The area to the south of the existing sand arena which would form the area for the extension is used by the club for stick and balling. The club currently uses the existing arena for horse jumping / riding lessons, but the uses are restricted by the arena's inadequate size. An extension to the arena, as proposed in this application, would be of massive benefit to the club and its members by safely facilitating a much broader spectrum of uses, including winter polo, schooling for lunging/dressage and jumping for non polo.

Being able to use the sand arena for polo in the winter would help to establish a more even usage of the club throughout the course of the year, rather than just during the summer season which runs from April - September.

Currently, horses at the club are turned out on the grassed area to the north of the existing sand arena. This is problematic as trespassers are free to wander on to the land and come into contact with the horses, which poses a health and safety risk to the public and horses alike. There have been numerous issues in the past with dogs running onto the area and the public feeding the horses. The proposed enlarged sand arena would also provide a safer, more practical area for turning out the horses, as well as the other uses described above.

The Site

Ham Polo Club is part of the Ham House Conservation Area and is close to Ham House which is a Grade I Listed Building and a Scheduled ancient monument. The estate of Ham House is Grade II* listed, along with the adjacent German School. The site is within three Metropolitan Open Land Designations (Douglas House, Ham House, and Ham Polo) and

forms part of a Site of Nature Importance (Field North of Ham House), Public Open Space (Meadows in front of Ham House and Petersham Meadows) and is within Flood Zones 2, 3, 3a and 3b, an Archaeological Priority Area and Thames Policy Area. There are also a number of protected views and vistas across the site. The site for the extended arena is within the grade II listed registered historic park (Ham House Sandy Lane).

The site is also within Flood zones 2, 3, 3a and 3b, an Archaeological Priority Area and Thames Policy Area.

Pre-App Advice Enquiry

Pre-application advice was sought from London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council ref 21/P0009/PREAPP. The Council's response, dated 20 April 2021, raised no in-principle objections, and the key issues were identified in the pre-app response as:

- A: Principle of Development / Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
- B: Design Consideration, impact upon Heritage Assets, views and vistas
- C: Neighbouring Amenity
- D: Ecology / Biodiversity and
- E: Trees
- F: Flood Risk
- G: Transport
- H: Fire Safety

The remainder of this document will address each item in turn.

A: Principle of Development

National planning policies on Green Belt land set out within the NPPF also apply to MOL. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in Green Belt, but one of the exceptions to this policy include for the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, so long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The proposed extension to the sand arena provides an appropriate facility for outdoor sports and outdoor recreation, and therefore complies with this exemption, as was agreed with the Council in the pre-application advice response.

B: Design Consideration / Heritage

The original design submitted within the pre-app advice enquiry was for the extended sand arena to have a 2m high timber fence to its perimeter, with netting above. During the pre-app advice zoom meeting, Senior Planning Officer, Wendy Wong Chang voiced her reservations about the height of the proposed netting above the timber fence. It was agreed that omitting the netting and limiting the close boarded timber fence to 1.8m in height would preserve the setting, character and appearance of nearby heritage assets.

The proposals have been carefully detailed to ensure that the advice regarding the fence height has been followed. The proposed elevation to the top of drawing WAALTD34 - 10 shows how the fence is kept to less than 1.8m, even when the ground level has been raised

slightly at the southernmost end of the extended sand arena to accommodate for the fall of the land. From the playing side of the arena, the fence would be a maximum of 1.5m as is shown on the attached drawings.

Heritage

Whilst the pre-application response from the council only briefly mentioned the heritage assets and archaeological potential of the site, a detailed Heritage Statement and Archaeological Desk Based Assessment has been submitted with the planning application, to fully assess the extended sand arena's potential impact.

The report, compiled by specialists AB Heritage, concluded that the proposed development would not be introducing anything into the Conservation Area that is not currently there, as the new sand arena is an extension of the existing. Coupled with the fact that the proposal site is enclosed by mature trees, and that the proposal is a ground level change, it is considered that there would be No Change to the existing character of the Conservation Area.

If the Council was minded to decide that the extended sand arena would cause harm to the conservation area and its heritage assets, it is submitted that, and backed up by the accompanying heritage statement, any harm caused would be less than substantial. This would be outweighed by the benefit to the local community and polo club by offering an extended provision of equestrian and polo related activities, and therefore in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies LP1 (Local Character) and LP3 (Heritage Assets) of the Local Plan.

C: Neighbouring Amenity

Due to the distance from any residential buildings, and the current use of the area for equestrian based activities, the proposals will have no impact on privacy, pollution, visual intrusion, noise and disturbance, and will therefore comply with Policy LP8 (Amenity and Living Conditions) of the Local Plan.

D: Ecology and Biodiversity

An ecology survey accompanies the planning application from specialists Arbtech, which assesses the potential impact on biodiversity and ecology. Please see the accompanying report from Arbtech for further information and mitigation measures. The report pays particular attention to badgers within the site area and within a 10m radius around its perimeter, as was identified within the pre-app advice response.

Details of the construction of the arena extension and its new fence have been included within the application documents. The width of the proposed extension has been reduced since the pre-app advice response to be further away from the lime trees that run along Melancholy Walk, so as not to disturb any of the surrounding vegetation for operational or construction purposes.

Ecological enhancements have been included within the Ecology Report, which accompanies this application, to ensure compliance with Local Plan Policy LP15 - Biodiversity

E: Trees

As outlined in the pre-app response there are many trees adjacent to the site, which are covered by statutory protection given their location within Ham House Conservation Area. As was previously mentioned, the width of the extended sand arena has been reduced since the pre-app response in order to ensure no risk to these existing trees.

The proposed finished level of the extended arena has been very carefully considered to not require any scraping off within the root protection areas of any of the trees. Where the extended sand arena occasionally overlaps into the root protection areas, the chosen levels are such that a no dig solution will be utilised as is detailed further in the accompanying Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement by specialists, Golby and Luck Ltd, to demonstrate compliance with Local Plan Policy 16, Trees, Woodlands and Landscape.

F: Flood Risk

As identified earlier in the report, the site is within flood zones 2, 3, 3a and 3b. The majority of the extended sand arena itself will be within flood zone 2, whereas the rest of the site is within flood zone 3. A flood risk assessment by ARK Environmental is included with the planning application submission.

A series of 300mm x 300mm drainage channels are proposed to be excavated from underneath the extended arena and will contain 100mm diameter perforated pipework in order for the extended arena surface to act as a large soakaway. This will ensure that the extended arena is utilised all year round, and will not affect flooding elsewhere, in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP21 Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage.

G: Transport

A Transport Statement has been included with the application which demonstrates that the sand arena would not result in an unmanageable increase to vehicular movement due to the additional activities / events that the extended sand arena would facilitate. The extended sand arena facility will enable additional uses mainly in the winter months when grass is not suitable for polo activities. As such, rather than increasing vehicular travel into the site at peak times, it would balance the usage of the club out over the whole year.

H: Fire Strategy

A Fire Safety Statement has been included within the application to accord with London Plan Policy D12. The document adds to the robust fire safety strategy of the site as a whole.

Conclusion

This design and access statement and the accompanying reports respond positively to the advice given at pre-app stage. The size of the sand arena extension has been reduced to alleviate the concerns raised in the pre-app response regarding the possible effects on the existing trees and ecology. Heritage, archaeology, flooding and transport have all also been successfully addressed.

If the Council was minded to decide that the extended sand arena would cause harm to the conservation area and its heritage assets, it is submitted that, and backed up by the accompanying heritage statement, any harm caused would be less than substantial. This would be outweighed by the benefit to the local community and polo club by offering an extended provision of equestrian and polo related activities, and therefore in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies LP1 and LP3 of the Local Plan.