

# Didcot HIF1 Playing Field Note

This Note has been prepared following the receipt of Sport England's holding objection to the Didcot HIF1 planning application (ref: R3.0138/21).

*"The site is considered to constitute playing field, or land last used as playing field, as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). As such Sport England is a statutory consultee.*

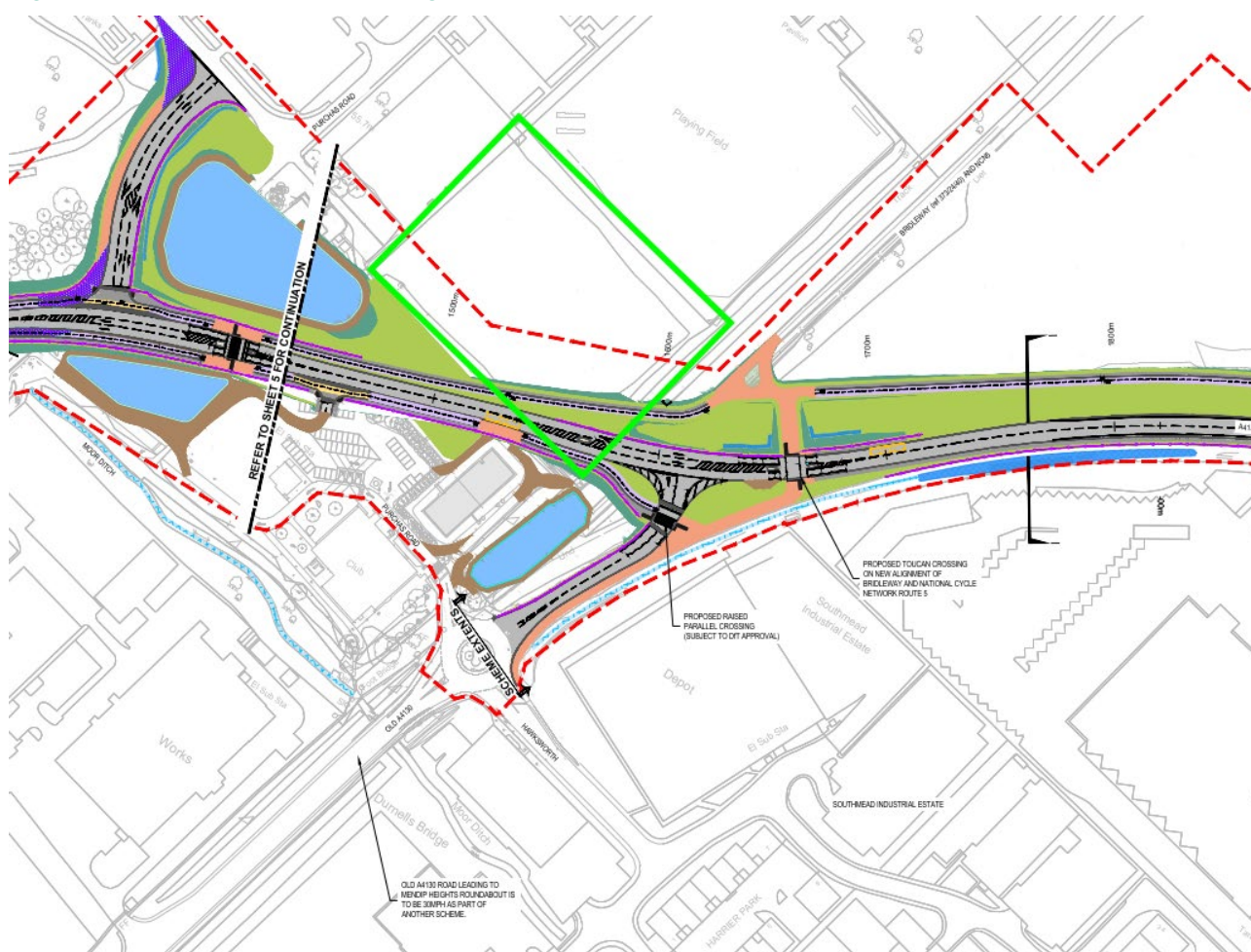
*Sport England has sought to consider the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (particularly Para. 97) and against its own playing fields policy. Unfortunately there is insufficient information to enable Sport England to adequately assess the proposal or to make a substantive response. Please therefore could the following information be provided as soon as possible:*

- *With reference to drawing number GEN\_PD ACM ELS DGT\_ZZ\_ZZ\_ZZ DR LV 0006 rev P03, Preliminary Landscape Masterplan sheet 6 of 19, it is clear there is a loss of a football pitch. This has not appeared to have been addressed or mitigated in the proposal. Can the applicants please confirm what mitigation package is being proposed to compensate for the loss of the playing field area/playing pitch?"*

## Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is located within an old RWE playing field as shown on Figure 1 below identified by the green box.

**Figure 1 – Extract from General Arrangement Sheet 6 of 19**





The below Google Earth imagery dated from September 2021 shows the field in question as greenfield only, and the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal submitted with the application shows the field as poor semi-improved grassland.

**Figure 2: Google Earth Imagery Dated September 2021**



It is only when Google Earth Imagery from January 2010 is viewed that it is possible to see that the existing field was previously used as a football pitch. This correlates with information obtained from RWE that the playing field has not been used in 11 years – see **Appendix A**.

**Figure 3: Google Earth Imagery Dated January 2010**



## Assessment

The land referred to by Sport England in their representation is not currently available for sports use given its private association with the former coal-fired Didcot A Power Station which ceased use in 2013 and has been demolished. The former clubhouse and all associated facilities have been removed and there are no prospects of the land being made available for sport in the future, nor is there an expressed need for this which is set out below.

A review of the Vale of White Horse Playing Pitch Study (October 2015) has been undertaken. The Playing Pitch Study forms part of the evidence base for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 2 and is therefore considered robust and up-to-date. The Playing Pitch Study followed the Sport England Methodology set out in the Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance 2013 and Sport England was closely involved in its preparation (see paragraph 1.1 of Playing Pitch Study). The Study provides a needs-based strategy for providing additional pitches across the Vale of White Horse area to meet the demand generated by the proposed development set out within the Local Plan Part 2.

Section 5 of the Playing Pitch Study sets out provision of football during the 2014/15 football season. The Playing Pitch Study does not identify any existing football pitches at the RWE site.

The site is located within the Didcot Leisure Sub Area. The Playing Pitch Study states the following with regards to meeting the needs of the future for the Didcot Leisure Sub Area (paragraphs 5.63-5.65):

*“The area with the largest expected growth in demand for football pitches is the Didcot Leisure Sub Area. At present, there is just sufficient capacity to cater for both matches and training overall, though some sites such as Harwell Recreation Ground are under pressure. At this time there is some additional pitch provision planned at Boundary Park in Great Western Park in Didcot, with 1 adult and 5 junior football pitches together with rugby and cricket. This new provision at Boundary Park meets the identified needs of Didcot town and Great Western Park and this assessment therefore considers what else is required to be provided to meet the needs of the planned additional population in the Didcot Leisure Sub Area.*

*In the Vale part of the DLSA no other additional playing fields have been identified for football at this time although the new strategic housing site allocations plus the proposed additional housing at Valley Park, means that 9.82 ha of playing fields for football would be required to meet the needs of the new developments within the Vale part of Didcot Leisure Sub Area. Meeting the needs of this sub area is therefore the highest priority for the future. Again, the provision of 3G pitches in Didcot would help to reduce this need for grass pitches, and just the population of this part of Didcot alone would justify a large size 3G pitch open for community training use for 56 slots per week. There would still however be a need for at least 4.5 ha of football grass playing field space, with a pitch area of at least 3 ha which should preferably be located in Valley Park.*

*The viability of the option of developing a 3G pitch at Valley Park is in part as a replacement for grass pitches, however this would require detailed investigation prior to this being confirmed as the potential way forwards. This would need to include consideration of the management options, any commuted sum from the developer towards long term replacement of the carpet, and revenue generation for both club training and any small sided leagues.”*

As the old RWE football pitch is not considered within the Playing Pitch Study, we strongly believe it should not be considered as a football pitch. That said, if Sport England believe it should be considered as a football pitch, Sport England should be consulted as a non-statutory consultee as the old football pitch in question has not been used within the last five years, in accordance with Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance.

As the old RWE football pitch is not considered within the Playing Pitch Study baseline, its perceived loss as a result of the proposed development will not result in any additional need for a football pitch within the Didcot Leisure Sub Area. Therefore it will have no impact on the provision of football pitches.

The Playing Pitch Study identifies that in the Vale of White Horse part of the Didcot Leisure Sub Area, where the site is located, there is no identified need for additional football pitches with the exception of the need generated by the proposed housing site allocations. Any planning applications for these housing allocations will be required to meet the football pitch needs generated by their proposals (e.g. Great Western Park).

Given the results of the Playing Pitch Study, it is considered that Sport England Exception Policy 1 applies to the proposed development as a robust up-to-date assessment exists, which sets out that there is sufficient capacity within the Didcot Leisure Sub Area, which will remain the case should the proposed development be permitted as the old football pitch in question did not form part of the Playing Pitch Strategy baseline. The old football pitch also has no special significance to the interests of sport.

**Exception 1:** A robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

AECOM

05/10/22

## **Appendix A – RWE Letter**



**Mr G Belcher**  
**Oxfordshire County Council –**  
Infrastructure Planning Team,  
Environment & Place,  
County Hall,  
New Road,  
Oxford,  
OX1 1ND

Your ref.	-
Our ref.	Didcot A
Contact	Matthew Trigg
Phone	07866 625588
Email	Matthew.trigg@rwe.com

05 October 2022

## **Didcot Power Station**

Dear Gavin

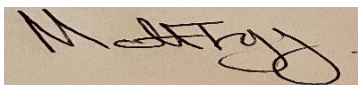
Further to your request for details on the previous use of the football and cricket pitches at Didcot A Power Station, I can provide you with the following information.

The football pitch is abandoned, it has not been used for over 11 years. When it was in use it was only used intermittently for inter-departmental games. It is not publicly accessible and it forms part of RWE's operational estate.

Regarding the cricket pitch, Didcot Cricket Club forfeited its lease in 2017 to move to state of the art facilities which were built for it at Great Western Park, Didcot. Subsequently, the pavilion has been demolished. This land also remains part of RWE's operational estate and it will be redeveloped in due course.

If you have further queries please let me know.

Yours sincerely



**Matthew Trigg**  
Development Planning Manager  
RWE Technology UK Ltd

Enc.

### **RWE Generation UK plc**

Trigonos  
Windmill Hill Business Park  
Whitehill Way  
Swindon  
Wiltshire SN5 6PB

T +44(0)1793 87 77 77  
F +44(0)1793 49 15 86  
I [www.rwe.com](http://www.rwe.com)

Registered Office:  
Windmill Hill Business Park  
Whitehill Way  
Swindon  
Wiltshire SN5 6PB

Registered in England  
and Wales no. 03892782