

Planning Application: 2022/1429

Land to rear of 129-135 Granville Rd SW18 5SF

### OBJECTION

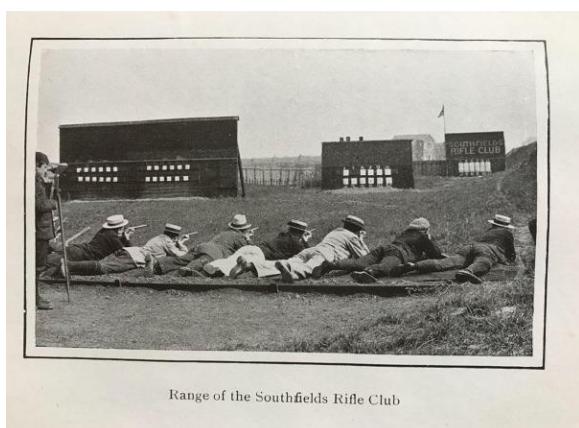
The site which is the subject of PA 2022/1429 is very close to the boundary of Sutherland Grove Conservation Area (SGCA), therefore part of the 'setting' of SGCA. In addition, a number of SGCA properties on the 'even' side of Sutherland Grove back on to the land in question (beyond the railway track). Members of WPRC include SGCARA residents.

SGCARA strongly Objects to the proposals contained within PA 2022/1429. That there are currently 358 Objections from widely-varying viewpoints attests to the high regard in which the Wimbledon Park Rifle Club(WPRC) is held in the locality & beyond. Of the many Objections which articulate very clearly grounds on which PA 2022/1429 should be Refused, SGCARA will initially reference three that represent different areas of criteria for Refusal & express our agreement with them, rather than re-iterate the specific arguments, as follows:

- 1) The lack of compliance of the proposals with many planning requirements at Local, London & National level is expressed very comprehensively in the Objection of Southfields Grid Residents Association (03.05.22). SGCARA agrees completely with the conclusions of SGRA.
- 2) The lack of credibility of many aspects of the Applicant's Planning Statement is set down very clearly in the Objection of the WPRC Secretary Stuart Pearson (14.05.22). SGCARA agrees completely with his conclusions.
- 3) The Applicant's disparaging assessments of the current bio-diversity of the site are resoundingly disproved by the records of detailed observations made over many years by the WPRC Club Captain & local resident – Lepidopterist Martin Honey, (with a long & distinguished career at the Natural History Museum & world-wide expertise). His Objection (16.05.22) makes clear the great richness of flora & fauna that has been able, indeed encouraged, to thrive on the site over the many years of its current use. SGCARA wholeheartedly agrees with his Objection.

### A) Relevant Historical background

Although PA 2022/1429 has to be considered on its own merits, it is important to see it within historical context. When Applicant Brian Peck purchased the land in question in 1992, WPRC had already been thriving on the site for **ninety years**. The longevity of WPRC is encapsulated in an early photo of shooting at a WPRC range (left below). The only surroundings are the railway embankment & track. No other buildings visible apart from the Baptist Church (now 'Everyday' church) close to Southfields District Line station. WPRC pre-dates all subsequent development of its surroundings.... (*& what more sensible place for a rifle range than parallel to a section of straight railway track...?*)



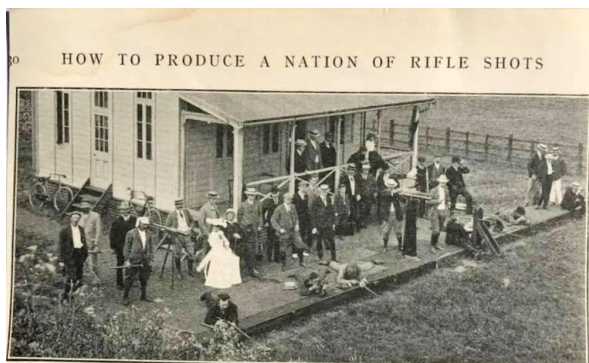
Range of the Southfields Rifle Club



SOUTHFIELDS' RIFLE CLUB.

Collins, South

Further photos show scenes at the club in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of which describes Southfields Rifle Club as *'the finest miniature shooting range in the country.'* Now called Wimbledon Park Rifle Club (WPRC), this establishment – on this specific site – is of great significance to the history of Wandsworth Borough, & should have protection as such.



Mr Peck continues to live far from the area. As a property-developer, his sole interest in purchasing the site was to make money, over-riding any regard or concern whatsoever for the distinguished history & culture of WPRC, or for the clear benefits to the environment/bio-diversity from the way the land is sensitively managed, or for the well-being of those who grow food in the allotments.



In the many, many years since these early photos, generations of people from all walks of life, gender, orientation & physical ability, ages 12 to 70+, have been given the opportunity to study the skill of shooting at WPRC – a sport at which Great Britain continues to excel internationally. They have acquired the disciplines of focus, quiet concentration, responsibility, respect for oneself & others in the process. One Objection to PA 2022/1429 is from a doctor (living within SGCA) who explains how WPRC was the only club that allowed her daughter to access this sport at the age of 15, & how her daughter has found joining & competing such a positive experience. That is testament to the value of the club to local residents. The well-run club has an exemplary safety record, has produced British & Olympic Champions, & in 2022 is providing judges for the World Paralympic Championships in Abu Dhabi. Its current President is a coach to the GB team. Submissions by other related organisations attest to the very high respect in which WPRC is held. Contrary to the Applicant's claim (Planning Statement 5.29) that *'we believe membership is relatively low'*, there is a 3-year waiting list for induction.



WPRC shooting ranges with spring blossom on the fruit trees, 2022

WPRC should be seen as uniquely-precious, valued & distinctive within the sporting facilities of Wandsworth Borough, London & beyond. Its special ambience is enhanced by the lovingly-attended

allotments & ensuing rich natural environment. SGCARA residents attending the 8<sup>th</sup> May Open Day described the special ambience of this site as *'paradise', 'magical' & 'a revelation'*, (& also observed that the majority of allotments were clearly being tended). **SGCARA urges the planning officers to visit the site to appreciate its 'magic' to the full, & to understand the devastating effect these proposals would have.** This special ambience cannot be manufactured, or indeed encapsulated simply by reference to planning guidelines, important as these are in Objecting to PA 2022/1429. It contributes significantly to the community-cohesion so much-needed in a large city. The special ambience has grown out of years of care & respectful attention both to the people who come to learn to shoot & to the natural environment in which this all takes place. Countless children en route to & from school previously had the delight of seeing horses in the stables that existed on the site-frontage (providing manure for the allotments of course) adding to the 'magic' of this site. One local resident whose son suffered severe symptoms of ADHD & Aspergers Syndrome tells of how much the child's symptoms were calmed on seeing the horses every morning on the way to school. Children would no doubt be enjoying that 'rural' delight to this day had Brian Peck not purchased the site, and gained Planning Permission to demolish the stables, replacing them with houses & hard-standing.

#### B) Nursery – inappropriate location & unnecessary

The Planning Statement (PS) states that the new facility would be *'away from busy roads & there are existing traffic calming measures nearby'*. This statement shows how little understanding the Applicant has of the local area & site in question. Granville Rd is part of a (morning & evening) commuter 'rat-run'. Now that there is some restriction on commuters driving West-East down Girdwood Rd & on to Granville Rd (mornings only), commuters instead speed down Sutherland Grove, turning left at the nearby roundabout to access Granville Rd. The road humps are no deterrent to speeding & there is no practical Enforcement of the 20mph speed limit. The proximity of the railway bridge, restricting traffic-visibility, compounds the danger of this section of road, so close to the site in question. The nearby roundabout has been the scene of nasty accidents, most recently 1<sup>st</sup> May, requiring the attendance of police & ambulance.

The PS also mentions *'links to existing footpath & cycle networks'*. There are no cycle networks or cycle paths in this area.

As others have observed, the access road from Granville Rd into the site is not wide enough for two cars, or, even more crucially, one vehicle plus safe, segregated walking access for adults & little children/push chairs etc. Parents would have to park then drop off – in a road lacking additional on-street parking spaces. Considerable congestion would be caused by numerous children being dropped off by car. (The station & bus-routes are far enough away that parents in a hurry to get work will be unlikely to choose those options.) Even if all car park spaces were reserved for nursery staff only (estimated minimum 20 personnel for 100 children), safety in this narrow access road would be more than problematic.

**PS 5.68/5.72:** The methodology of assessing associated vehicle trips is not explained, & the prediction of 29 x 2-way vehicle trips am, & similar pm, appears unrealistic for 100 children & the numbers of staff required to care for them, as is the inconsistency – indeed irrationality - of predictions of likely drop-off/pick up times.

The Applicant claims that nursery places are required in the area, making an erroneous conclusion in **PS 5.10** *'The London Plan refers to the 'Demand for childcare in London - drivers and projections' (GLA, March 2018) that estimates that an additional 100,000 childcare places will be needed between 2016 – 2041.*

This will be relevant to parts of London, but not to this vicinity. There is scope for very little additional house-building in this area, so population-numbers are stable, (& in fact birth-rates dropping). There is substantial new residential building in the centre of Wandsworth, including its riverside sites, but that has been accompanied by the provision of appropriately-local nurseries, (eg Kido Wandsworth in the

Ram Quarter, Abacus Ark & Wandsworth Nursery Pre-School at Western Riverside & new residential developments close to Wandsworth bridge). In fact the two nurseries closest to this proposed site have submitted strong Objections to a nursery, especially of this scale, one claiming that it would jeopardise the viability of the successful business she has built up over 33 years, because there is already spare capacity in local provision. Schools will be made well aware, through the Local Authority, of accurate predicted need into the future. It is therefore significant that two local primary schools, who also have pre-school nurseries, have also Objected, one claiming clearly that 'provision is sufficient for the local community', & the other suggesting that unnecessary additional supply of nursery places would cause schools to lose vital per-capita funding if their own nursery-numbers dropped. SGCARA has done its own informal 'poll' of local nurseries, & it appears that the majority have ongoing spaces & availability.

#### C) Additional tennis facilities not required

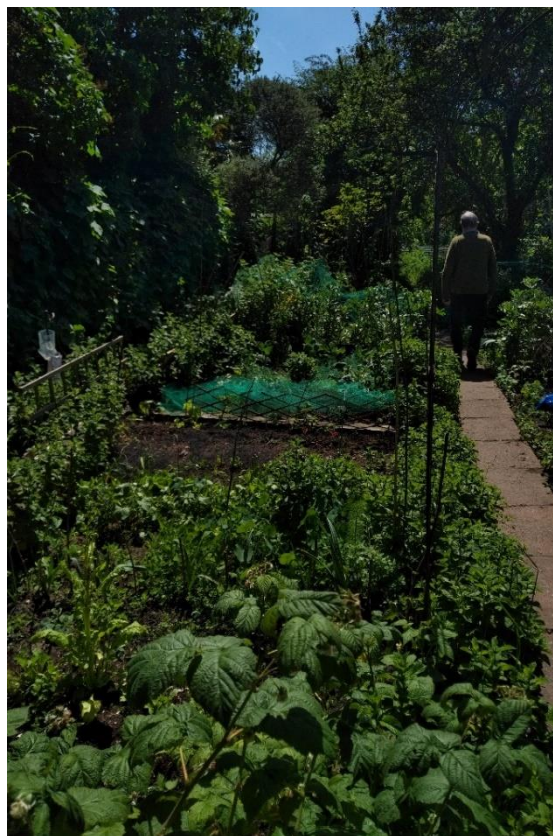
The Objection from Southfields Tennis Club makes clear that additional tennis facilities are not required. There are 10 all-weather courts in King Georges Park & 6 at Southfields Tennis Club for instance. Local tennis teachers also point out that mini-courts are unnecessary & reduce flexibility of use. If needed, teachers can simply make 2 'mini courts' from one full-size court, temporarily installing 2 extra nets at right-angles to the centre net.

#### D) Additional Environmental Concerns

The environmental assessments appear fatally-skewed by being undertaken at a time when activities were still curtailed by lockdown (& following a long period when visits to allotments were not even Permitted), but also by its Methodology & some inaccuracy. (See Objection of Martin Honey: 3) above). The disruption of demolition, destruction of the allotments, proposed loss of trees & creation of more hard-standing would be very detrimental to the sensitive bio-diversity that has been established over many years.



WPRC allotments in May 2022, well-tended now that COVID restrictions are at an end.





Allotments in early spring 2022



stag beetle on the site



One of a large variety of moths humanely trapped, recorded & released by Natural History Museum Lepidopterist & Club Captain Martin Honey.

The activities on site of 100 small children would hardly be conducive to re-establishing this bio-diversity after construction. Children of appropriate age – eg from St Michaels C of E Primary School – visit the site. No doubt this opportunity could be able to be extended to other schools if WPRC is able to secure a more certain future.

The status of the proposed wild-flower meadow is unclear. If children are allowed to play on it, its stated contribution to bio-diversity would likely be impaired. If they are not allowed to play on it, there will be disappointment, & their play area will have unfortunate restriction.

The proposed site is low-lying, relative to the steep hilly areas to the West which drain towards it. The proposed additional hard-standing could make surface-water flooding more likely. There has already been in 2021 the most severe flooding incident recorded at the Girdwood/Sutherland/Granville roundabout, with the drains overwhelmed & road-surface damaged following a storm, (possibly compounded by the felling of two substantial rear-garden trees – a eucalyptus & stone pine - close to the roundabout).

#### E) Other factors

**PS 5.47** implies that these *small* allotments are of less worth than those of the customary larger size. However, they will be just right for some people for whom a large allotment would be unmanageable.

**PS 5.80** complains of anti-social behaviour in the hard-standing area/car-park (claims disputed by others). Given that 24/7 access to that hard-standing is required by houses 129-135 Granville Rd, the proposals would make no difference as regards possible anti-social behaviour.

SGCARA urges the Planning Dept to Refuse this most unwelcome planning application.