Project: Silk Hope Cricket Fields
Location: 4051 Silk Hope Gum Springs Rd.
Parcel Number: 10737

Narrative

Silk Hope Cricket Practice Facility

The Applicant seeks to conditionally rezone a 20.736-acre parcel located at 4051 Silk Hope–Gum Springs Road (Parcel 10737) from R-1 (Residential-1) to CD-RB (Conditional District – Regional Business) to allow the development of an open-air cricket practice facility.

The facility will operate year-round during daylight hours, weather permitting, and will provide two fields with a potential third field, dedicated to cricket practice. Most surrounding parcels are currently zoned R-1 (Residential). Surrounding parcels are zoned R-1 (Residential) with the exception of adjacent parcel 10725, which is split zoned as Heavy Industrial (IND-H) / R1 zoning per Chatham County GIS records; parcels 10733 and 10735 are zoned Heavy Industrial (IND-H), and parcel 10747 is zoned Light Industrial (IND-L).

Regional Context

Cricket is becoming an increasingly important part of the recreational and sporting landscape in the Triangle region. The Triangle Cricket League has expanded significantly over the past decade, growing from approximately 16 teams in 2010 to more than 120 teams and over 2,000 players today.

Despite this rapid growth, the region still has very few dedicated cricket facilities, and most activity occurs on adapted multi-purpose fields or temporary pitches.
Because of the limited number of dedicated cricket facilities:

- Teams often share multi-use parks designed primarily for other sports.
- Practices are frequently scheduled early in the morning or late in the evening due to field availability.
- Players regularly travel across multiple counties to attend matches and practices.

This regional demand is one of the reasons additional practice-focused facilities are being explored throughout surrounding counties, including Chatham County. The proposed practice facility would become a valuable addition to Chatham County's recreational network and to the broader region's growing cricket community.

The project advances multiple goals and strategies identified in the Chatham County Comprehensive Plan, including:

- Diversifying land use opportunities
- Enhancing equitable access to active recreation
- Conserving ecological resources and open space
- Supporting community-based recreation for a growing population

By meeting rising regional demand for recreational space, the site will expand opportunities for year-round outdoor activity while preserving open space and protecting

Chatham County's natural assets. In doing so, the proposal supports the county's rural identity and quality of life amid continued population growth.

Site Development Plan

Silk Hope Cricket proposes to develop three full-size cricket practice fields on the property. The project will also include a parking area to support the recreational use of the site.

Two existing structures on the property will be reused:

- The existing house will serve as the facility's office space and will provide restrooms and changing facilities.
- The existing barn will be used for equipment storage.

This adaptive reuse approach minimizes new construction while making effective use of existing structures.

Landscaping and Screening

Landscaping and screening will comply with Chatham County's zoning ordinance and landscape design guidelines.

The project will utilize a combination of:

- Preserved existing vegetation
- Supplemental plantings

These elements will be designed to meet or exceed required buffer standards, with particular attention given to buffering along residential property boundaries.
Existing perimeter fencing will be retained. Where appropriate, opaque and semi-opaque visual buffers will be created using a mix of evergreen and deciduous native plant species, augmenting existing vegetation, and selected to provide:

- visual screening
- enhanced privacy
- ecological and habitat value

The proposed landscaping will contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the existing ecological systems on the site.

Lighting and Parking

Because practice sessions will occur during daylight hours, no field lighting is proposed. Any lighting installed on the property (such as security lighting) will comply fully with Chatham County lighting ordinances.

A gravel parking area providing 64 spaces will serve the facility.

Activity Levels and Attendance

The facility is expected to host 100 or fewer people during any practice session.

For recreational or informal practice matches:

- Each team fields 11 players, resulting in 22 active participants.
- Teams typically bring 1–4 substitute players, bringing total players to approximately 24–28 participants.

Additional participants may include:

- 2 umpires or coaches
- 1 scorer or league volunteer

This results in approximately 26–32 participants during a typical recreational match. Matches may also include 10–30 spectators, usually friends or family members of players, for a total of 36 to 62 people.

Parking and Arrival Patterns

Cricket activities generate predictable and moderate parking demand, with arrivals typically spread out over time rather than concentrated at a single moment. Typical parking demand is as follows:

Practice sessions
- 10–20 vehicles (many players carpool)

Practice matches
- 20–40 vehicles, including players, volunteers, and spectators

Arrival patterns typically occur:
- 15–30 minutes before and after practice sessions
- 30–45 minutes before practice matches

Duration of Activities

Typical durations include:

- Adult practice sessions: 2–3 hours
- Youth practice sessions: 1½–2 hours
- Practice matches: 3–4 hours

Utilities and Facilities

The facility will utilize the existing well and septic system on the property. The existing house will serve multiple operational functions, including:

- office space
- meeting space
- restroom facilities (three restrooms available)

The barn will provide storage for equipment and field maintenance materials.

Field Maintenance

Maintenance of cricket practice fields is similar to maintaining multipurpose athletic fields, such as soccer or baseball outfields. Two primary components require maintenance:

1. The outfield grass
2. The practice pitch (wicket) surface

Practice facilities generally require less intensive maintenance than professional match fields. The outfield may utilize existing grass supplemented with Bermuda grass, which is widely used for athletic fields in the southeastern United States due to its:

- durability under heavy play
- rapid recovery
- drought resistance
- ability to withstand hot summer conditions

The pitch (wicket) surface may consist of either:

- a natural turf pitch maintained with Bermuda grass, or
- an artificial cricket pitch, typically a synthetic turf surface installed over a compacted stone base

Both options are widely used for recreational cricket facilities.

Environmental Stewardship

The Applicant is committed to preserving key environmental features on the property, including:

- existing trees
- natural vegetative and riparian buffers
- open space areas

These features will be maintained and incorporated into the final site design to protect the site's ecological character while supporting recreational use.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater impacts associated with the proposed Silk Hope Cricket Practice Facility are expected to be minimal due to the predominantly open and pervious nature of the site design. The majority of the property will remain as grassed recreational fields and preserved natural areas, which allow rainfall to infiltrate naturally into the soil. The playing fields consist primarily of maintained turf grass. The existing topography for the proposed field areas is gently sloping at approximately 5-8% slope. The slopes will be further reduced to the 2-3% range during field construction, which will result in an overall reduction in runoff rate from the field areas. The overall site drains to the SE, which contains an existing forested area. This area will largely remain undisturbed and the drainage patterns unchanged.

The primary impervious surfaces associated with the project will be limited to the gravel parking area, paved ADA parking, and accessible sidewalks to facilitate access to the existing buildings. This will require a minimal amount of new impervious surface and we anticipate that it will result in a proportionally small amount of additional stormwater runoff. Due to the limited amount of additional impervious area, we do not anticipate that a new SCM will be required to meet regulatory requirements.

As illustrated on the site concept plan, the property also contains existing natural drainage features, including a pond and a stream, which contribute to the site's existing stormwater management and natural hydrology. The site topography is generally moderate and fairly level in the areas proposed for the fields, further reducing the likelihood of concentrated runoff or erosion.

Stormwater management for Parcel 10737 will be designed in full compliance with Chatham County zoning ordinance requirements and stormwater design guidelines. Any required stormwater control measures will be incorporated into the final site design to

ensure that post-development runoff conditions are appropriately managed while maintaining the site's natural drainage patterns.

Compatibility with Surrounding Land Uses

The proposed cricket practice facility is designed to be compatible with surrounding land uses and consistent with the rural character of this portion of Chatham County.
The majority of surrounding parcels are currently zoned R-1 (Residential-1) and consist of rural residential uses, open land, and agricultural properties. The proposed facility is an open-air recreational use with minimal structural development, which helps maintain the visual and environmental character of the surrounding area.

Several factors support compatibility with adjacent properties:

- Limited structural development. The project will primarily consist of open grass fields, utilizing the existing house and barn for operational functions.
- No field lighting. Activities will occur only during daylight hours, avoiding nighttime impacts on surrounding properties.
- Preservation of open space. A large portion of the site will remain as open field and preserved vegetation.
- Landscaped buffers. Existing vegetation and additional plantings will provide screening and visual buffering along residential property lines.
- Reuse of existing buildings. The project avoids large new buildings by adapting the existing house and barn.

In addition, nearby parcels include industrial zoning classifications (IND-H and IND-L), which indicates that the surrounding area already contains a mix of residential and non-residential land uses. The proposed cricket practice facility represents a low-intensity recreational use that fits comfortably within this mixed context.

Because the facility functions primarily as open recreational space, it maintains the rural landscape and visual character of the area while introducing a community-serving recreational amenity.

Noise Characteristics of Cricket Activities

Some nearby residents have expressed concerns about potential noise generated by cricket practices and recreational matches. In general, cricket is considered a relatively low-noise field sport, particularly when compared with many other organized sports commonly played on community athletic fields.

Cricket does not involve amplified sound systems, whistles, horns, or continuous crowd activity. The primary sounds generated during practice sessions typically include:

- Players communicating on the field
- Occasional cheering or encouragement from teammates
- The sound of a bat striking the ball
- Routine coaching instructions

These sounds occur intermittently and are generally similar to those produced during soccer or softball practice sessions.

While published research focuses primarily on large sporting events, smaller-scale recreational activities such as cricket practices typically generate sound levels comparable to everyday outdoor activities and are generally lower than organized sports with whistles, amplification, or large spectator groups. These ranges are likely to be:

Activity	Typical Sound Level
Conversational speech outdoors	55–60 dBA
Cricket practice activity	~60–70 dBA
Youth soccer practice	~65–75 dBA
Softball or baseball practice	~70–80 dBA

For comparison, normal suburban daytime environments often range between 55 and 65 dBA due to typical neighborhood activity such as lawn maintenance, passing vehicles, and outdoor recreation.

Cricket also tends to produce less frequent high-impact sounds than sports such as baseball or softball. While the cricket bat occasionally strikes the ball with a sharp sound, these moments are intermittent and separated by longer periods of fielding and gameplay.

In addition, several characteristics of the proposed facility help further limit potential noise impacts:

- Daylight-only operation, with no nighttime play or lighting.
- Moderate attendance levels, generally fewer than 100 people on site.
- Large open space buffers around the practice fields.
- Existing vegetation and proposed landscape buffers that help absorb and diffuse sound.

Because activities occur in an open-field environment and involve relatively small groups of participants, sound dissipates quickly with distance. As a result, the overall noise profile of the proposed facility is expected to be comparable to or lower than that of typical community athletic practices already common in many rural and suburban areas.

It is also important to note that the proposed use is consistent with typical daytime recreational and agricultural activity patterns common in rural areas of Chatham County. Many rural properties regularly experience intermittent daytime sounds such as farm equipment, lawn maintenance, outdoor recreation, and community activities. The anticipated sound levels associated with cricket practice are comparable to these common daytime activities and are expected to remain temporary, intermittent, and limited to daylight hours.