

Replacement of Floodlighting System at the Utilita Bowl, Botley Road, West End, Southampton, SO30 3XH

1. Introduction

This Design and Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application on behalf of the Applicant, Hampshire Cricket Club (hereby referred to as 'the Applicant') for the replacement of the existing floodlighting system ('the proposals') at the Utilita Bowl, Botley Road, West End, Eastleigh BC ('the site').

The Utilita Bowl is an established international cricket venue and an important sporting and events facility serving Eastleigh, Hampshire, and the wider region. The cricket ground regularly hosts high-level domestic and international cricket and the continued ability of the venue to host elite cricket events is dependent upon the provision of floodlighting capable of meeting the minimum technical and performance requirements of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC). The timely delivery of the required floodlighting improvements is particularly urgent given the venue's scheduled hosting of an Ashes Test, in July, alongside other international men's and women's cricket fixtures, in 2027. Ensuring the floodlighting system is upgraded in advance of these events will be essential to maintaining the venue's ability to host international cricket and to meeting the applicable technical and performance requirements.

The existing floodlighting installation is no longer capable of reliably providing and maintaining the level of illumination required to meet the applicable technical and performance standards set by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and International Cricket Council (ICC). Installed in 2006, the existing system is now approximately 20 years old and has experienced a significant deterioration in light output over its operational life. Current illuminance at the wicket is understood to be approximately 16% of the required level, representing an 84% shortfall. In addition, the ageing installation is expected to be significantly less energy efficient than modern LED floodlighting systems, resulting in increased energy consumption, and operating costs.

The proposals therefore represent an essential upgrade to the existing sporting infrastructure rather than the introduction of new floodlighting to the site.

The proposal is supported by the following documents, submitted under separate cover:

- Design and Planning Statement
- Location & Site Plans
- Proposed & Existing Mast Positions
- Proposed Stadium Lighting Design
- Proposed Site Plan & Predicted Shadowing Drawing
- Proposed Spill & Glare Drawing
- Proposed Floodlight Elevations
- Lighting Survey Report (Existing)
- Lighting Impact Assessment (Proposed)
- Ecological Appraisal (Proposed)
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (Existing)

2. The Proposals

The proposal involves the replacement of the existing floodlighting installation serving the cricket ground with a new, modern LED-based system.

The submitted lighting design (Figure 1) provides for new mast positions, heights and associated LED luminaires designed specifically to achieve the lighting performance required for elite cricket. The proposed arrangement has been developed having regard to the location of the existing stadium stands, the playing surface, the required lighting distribution, and the need to control glare and light spill. Where practicable, the proposals also seek to improve upon the existing installation with modern, energy-efficient LED technology, improving overall system performance while minimising light spill and protecting the amenity of neighbouring residential properties. The submitted Abacus Lighting drawing, reference LS4065974/12, dated 26 June 2026, identifies the proposal as the "Utilita Bowl Southampton – Proposed Site Plan / Predicted Shadowing". The drawing identifies the proposed mast positions M1–M6 and notes that the new mast positions are located behind the stand in response to the operational requirements of the venue.

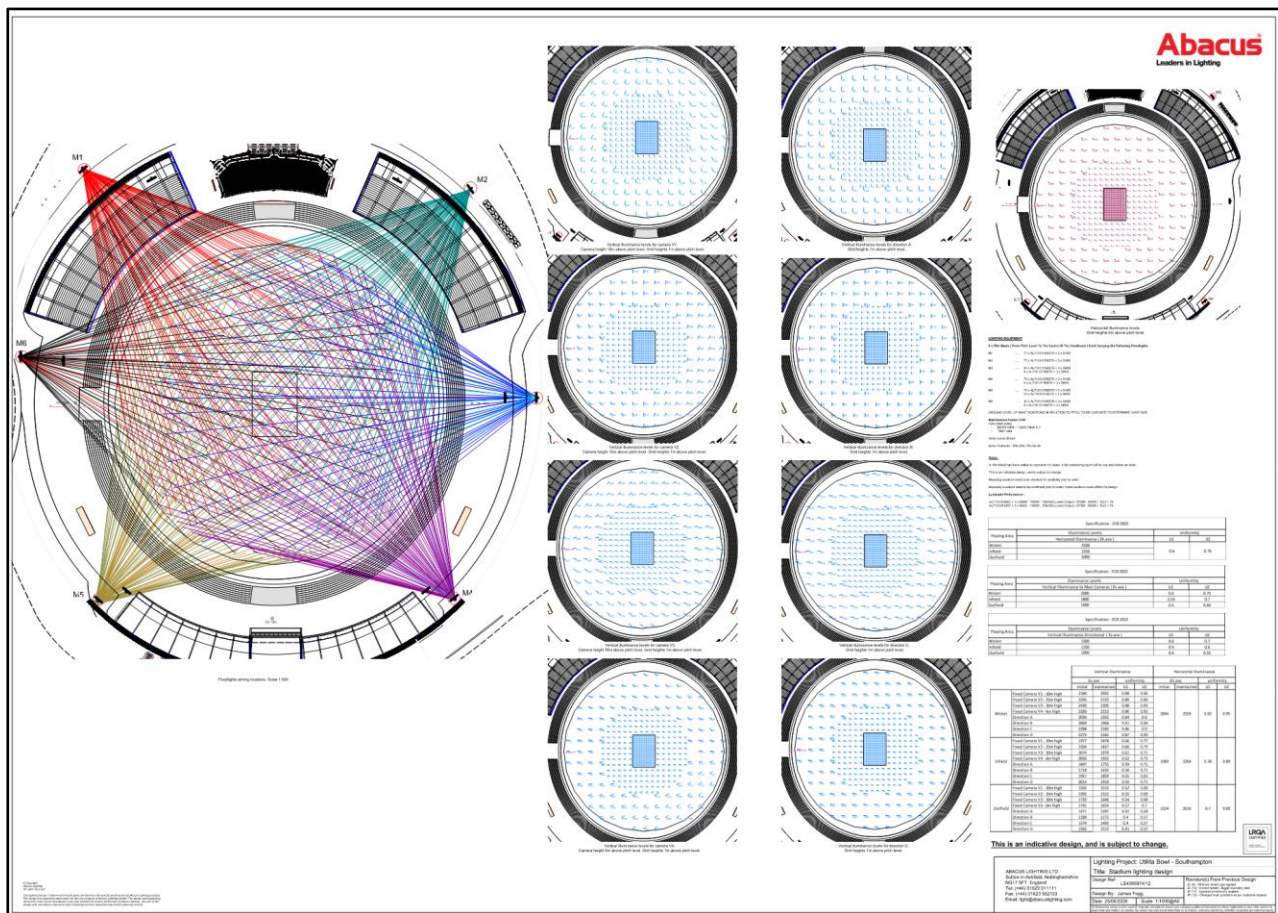


Figure 1

The lighting design has also considered the potential for shadowing arising from the relationship between the proposed mast positions and the existing stadium structure. The submitted drawing notes that predicted shadowing was assessed based upon a maximum stand height of 18 metres above pitch level and confirms that a full shadowing report will be undertaken as part of the detailed design process.

The proposed installation will provide a modern, controllable, and more efficient lighting solution, allowing the lighting output to be appropriately managed according to the requirements of different events and operating conditions.

3. Need for the Proposals

The principal reason for the proposals is the deterioration in performance of the existing floodlighting system, which was installed in 2006 and is now approximately 20 years old. As set out above, the system has experienced a significant reduction in light output over its operational life, with current illuminance at the wicket understood to be approximately 16% of the required level.

The existing floodlights use an ageing metal-halide technology. The maintained illumination levels produced by the system are deteriorating at a greater rate than anticipated. Although the existing installation remains operational, its continued use does not provide the necessary long-term certainty that the required lighting standards can be maintained.

For an international cricket venue, the quality of the floodlighting is fundamental to the safe and effective playing of the game. Players, umpires, and broadcasters require appropriate levels of illumination, uniformity, and visual conditions to allow the ball to be tracked throughout all phases of play.

The replacement system is therefore required to ensure that the Utilita Bowl can continue to satisfy the applicable minimum requirements of both the ECB and ICC for the hosting of elite cricket events.

This is particularly important given the specialist nature of the venue. The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan identifies the importance of the site as a sporting facility of regional significance and recognises the role of the Ageas Bowl/Utilita Bowl as an international cricket ground and events location. Policy WE4 specifically requires development proposals to ensure that the function of the venue as an international cricket ground and events location is not compromised.

The proposed floodlighting replacement directly supports this policy objective by ensuring that the established sporting use of the site can continue to operate at the required level.

4. Consideration of Alternative Options

Several alternatives have been investigated before arriving at the proposals. The following assessment demonstrates that the proposal represents the most appropriate means of maintaining the venue's elite cricket function whilst addressing the technical limitations of the existing installation.

4.1 Continuing with the Existing Metal-Halide Lamps

The first option considered was to retain the existing floodlight columns and continue operating the existing metal-halide lamp technology, replacing lamps, as necessary.

This option is not considered to provide a suitable long-term solution.

The existing system is already experiencing deterioration in maintained lux levels at a greater rate than anticipated. Continuing to rely upon the existing technology would therefore provide progressively less certainty that the required cricket lighting standards could be maintained.

In addition, the regulatory position relating to mercury-containing lamps is changing. Metal-halide lamps are subject to the UK's Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) regime because of their mercury content. The current GB exemption for mercury in metal-halide lamps is time-limited and currently runs until 24 February 2027.

Consequently, investment in continued reliance upon an ageing metal-halide system would not represent a sustainable or suitably future-proof solution for a venue that needs to maintain its lighting capability over the longer term.

The replacement of the system with modern LED technology provides significantly greater certainty over future availability, maintainability, controllability, and performance.

4.2 Retaining the Existing Columns and Replacing the Luminaires with LED

A second option considered was to retain the existing floodlight columns and replace the metal-halide luminaires with LED luminaires.

This option was investigated but was found not to be technically feasible.

The proposed LED floodlight heads are heavier than the existing metal-halide equipment. The existing column foundations were designed for the loading associated with the existing floodlighting arrangement and are not sufficient to accommodate the increased loading associated with the proposed LED heads.

Retaining the existing columns would therefore require substantial structural and foundation intervention and would not provide an appropriate or reliable basis for the new lighting installation.

The use of new columns with appropriately designed foundations allows the lighting equipment to be properly engineered for the proposed loads and provides a safe and durable installation.

4.3 New Lighting Locations at the Existing Column Height

A further option considered was to install new LED floodlights at alternative locations whilst retaining a similar column height to the existing installation.

Replacement of the Floodlighting System

Design & Planning Statement



This option was discounted because of the relationship between the luminaire height, aiming angles and the playing area.

At the existing height, positioning the LED luminaires in the proposed alternative locations would result in unacceptable glare for players. This is a particularly important consideration in cricket, where players need to maintain a clear and uninterrupted view of the ball, including when it is played or delivered at high speed.

The issue is not simply one of achieving the required lux levels. The lighting must also provide suitable uniformity and visual conditions whilst avoiding unacceptable glare.

The experience of other major cricket venues demonstrates the significance of this issue. Player feedback concerning glare from modern LED floodlighting is a serious operational consideration and reinforces the need for the lighting geometry, mast positions and luminaire aiming angles to be carefully designed as part of the overall solution.

The proposed mast arrangement has therefore been developed to achieve the necessary lighting performance whilst controlling glare and avoiding the adverse playing conditions that could result from retaining the existing mast height.

The Applicant will seek to maximise the reuse of the existing floodlighting equipment as part of the proposed works. Where a suitable future use can be identified, components will be retained and repurposed in support of a circular economy approach. Where reuse is not practicable, the existing floodlighting equipment and associated materials will, wherever possible, be separated and recycled through appropriate waste streams, minimising waste and reducing the environmental impact of the replacement works. Photos of the existing floodlights can be seen in figures 2-4.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

5. Design Development and Lighting Performance

The proposal has been developed through a specialist sports-lighting design process rather than simply replacing the existing lamps on a like-for-like basis.

The principal design objectives are to:

- provide maintained lighting levels capable of meeting the applicable ECB and ICC requirements for elite cricket.
- achieve an appropriate and consistent distribution of light across the playing area.
- minimise glare to players, umpires, and other users of the ground.
- control light spill beyond the cricket ground.
- provide appropriate lighting quality for high-level and televised cricket.
- provide a reliable and maintainable lighting installation for the long term.
- enable the lighting levels to be appropriately controlled according to the requirements of individual events; and
- provide a system that is compatible with modern LED technology and its associated control systems.

The ECB's Facility Design Standards (2023), for cricket lighting, places importance on illumination, uniformity, colour rendering, and glare control, as well as appropriate testing and commissioning of the lighting system.

The proposal is therefore not intended simply to increase the quantity of artificial light. It is intended to provide the right level and quality of light in the right locations, whilst controlling the potential effects of artificial lighting beyond the playing area.

6. Light Spill, Glare and Residential Amenity

The Applicant recognises that the Utilita Bowl is situated within a predominantly open setting and that artificial lighting has the potential to affect neighbouring residential amenity, the landscape and biodiversity. However, the site is not located within an entirely dark or undeveloped environment. The M27 motorway runs immediately to the north of the venue and is itself an established lit transport corridor, providing an existing source of artificial illumination within the surrounding landscape.

The proposed floodlighting has therefore been designed regarding the existing lighting context, whilst seeking to minimise additional glare, light spill and upward light using modern LED luminaires and carefully controlled optical distributions.

Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Light Pollution recognises that artificial lighting can provide important benefits, including extending opportunities for sport and recreation, whilst also identifying the potential for poorly designed lighting to cause annoyance, affect wildlife and adversely affect enjoyment of the countryside. The guidance promotes the use of appropriate lamp and luminaire selection, positioning and control to ensure that light is directed only where it is required.

The proposed LED system provides significantly greater scope for accurate optical control and dimming than the existing technology. This allows light to be directed towards the playing area and controlled according to the operational requirement.

The intention is not to increase unnecessary illumination outside the cricket playing area. Instead, the proposal seeks to improve the performance of the established floodlighting installation whilst controlling the associated environmental and amenity effects.

Where appropriate, operating controls can also be used to reduce lighting levels when full competition lighting is no longer required.

7. Landscape and Visual Considerations

The proposals will remain within the established Utilita Bowl sporting complex and will continue an existing use of the site.

The proposal will not introduce a new floodlit activity or materially alter the fundamental character or use of the site. The principal change will be the replacement and rationalisation of the existing floodlighting infrastructure.

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan recognises the importance of balancing the sporting significance of the site with its wider green and open landscape setting. Policy WE4 supports development which facilitates the important sporting role of the site whilst requiring appropriate scale, form and location and the protection of the wider landscape context.

The proposed installation has been designed with this balance in mind. The location and height of the proposed masts have been considered in conjunction with the existing stadium structures and the requirements of the playing surface. The submitted lighting plan also identifies the predicted shadowing associated with the proposed arrangement, demonstrating that the relationship between the proposed lighting infrastructure and existing structures has been considered as part of the design process.

8. Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

The Applicant acknowledges that artificial lighting can potentially affect ecological receptors, particularly nocturnal species.

The proposed replacement system will therefore incorporate modern LED luminaires with improved optical control, allowing the lighting to be directed more accurately towards the areas where it is required and reducing unnecessary light spill.

This approach is consistent with the requirements of Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Policy DM11, which seeks to protect and enhance designated sites, ecological networks and other habitats and features of biodiversity value.

The proposal should also be considered in the context of the existing floodlit sporting use of the site. The development is not introducing artificial lighting to an otherwise unlit area; it is replacing an established lighting installation with a modern system capable of providing improved control over the distribution and operation of the light.

Any detailed ecological considerations arising from the final lighting design can be addressed through the relevant technical assessments and, where necessary, appropriate mitigation or operational controls.

9. Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

The replacement of the existing metal-halide system with LED technology represents a significant improvement in the efficiency and controllability of the floodlighting installation.

The proposed system will provide the required lighting performance using modern LED technology, whilst allowing the output to be controlled and adjusted according to the requirements of the event.

The ability to control and dim the lighting will avoid the unnecessary operation of the system at maximum output when this is not required.

The replacement therefore provides an opportunity to improve the environmental performance of an essential piece of existing sporting infrastructure whilst also addressing the operational limitations of the existing system.

10. Planning Policy Considerations

10.1 Planning Policy Framework

The proposal has been considered against the relevant national and local planning policy framework, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan.

At the local level, Policy WE4 – Land at Ageas Bowl and Tennis Centre, Botley Road, West End provides a positive framework for the continued enhancement of the site's sporting facilities, whilst ensuring that development does not compromise its function as an international cricket ground and events venue.

At the national level, the NPPF supports well-designed development, the continued provision of sporting facilities and the protection of residential amenity and the natural environment. It also requires the impacts of artificial lighting on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation interests to be appropriately considered.

10.2 Design and Lighting Performance

The proposal directly supports the established international cricket use of the Utilita Bowl by replacing the existing floodlighting system, installed in 2006, which has experienced a significant deterioration in lighting performance.

The proposed mast positions, heights, and LED luminaires have been designed specifically to provide the lighting performance required for elite and international cricket. The use of modern LED technology will also improve energy efficiency, controllability and optical precision compared with the existing installation.

10.3 Light Spill, Glare and Residential Amenity

The Applicant recognises that the Utilita Bowl is situated within a predominantly open setting and that artificial lighting has the potential to affect residential amenity, landscape, and biodiversity. The M27 also provides an established lit transport corridor immediately to the north of the venue.

The proposed lighting has been carefully designed through the positioning and orientation of masts and luminaires, together with controlled optical distributions, to minimise unnecessary light spill, glare, and upward light. This approach is consistent with the Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Light Pollution, which promotes appropriate lamp and luminaire selection, positioning, and control.

10.4 Overall Policy Compliance

The proposal provides essential infrastructure to support the established international sporting use of the Utilita Bowl, whilst incorporating modern, energy-efficient technology and measures to minimise potential environmental and amenity effects. The proposal is therefore considered consistent with the relevant objectives of the NPPF and Policy WE4 of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan.

11. Conclusion

The proposed replacement of the Utilita Bowl floodlighting system is necessary to secure the continued operation of the venue as a major domestic and international cricket ground, supporting men's and women's cricket across Test, ODI, T20 and short-form formats. The need for replacement is particularly urgent given the venue's scheduled hosting of an Ashes Test and other international fixtures in 2027, requiring the upgraded system to be operational in advance of these events.

The existing floodlighting system is experiencing deterioration in maintained lux levels at a greater rate than anticipated. Without replacement, there is an increasing risk that the venue will be unable to maintain the lighting performance required by the ECB and ICC for the hosting of elite cricket events.

Three alternative approaches have been investigated and discounted:

1. **Continuing with the existing metal-halide technology** would not provide a reliable long-term solution because of the deteriorating performance of the existing system, together with the changing regulatory environment governing mercury-containing lamps.
2. **Retaining the existing columns and replacing the luminaires with LED units** is not technically feasible because the heavier LED heads cannot be satisfactorily accommodated by the existing column foundations.
3. **Installing LED luminaires at alternative locations but retaining the existing mast height** would create unacceptable glare for players and would therefore fail to provide the required quality of lighting for elite cricket.

The proposed solution addresses these constraints through a purpose-designed modern LED floodlighting system, with six new mast positions and appropriate structural foundations, designed to provide the required lighting performance whilst controlling glare, shadowing, and light spill.

The development represents an upgrade to existing sporting infrastructure and does not introduce a new use to the site. It will support the long-term viability of the Utilita Bowl as an international cricket venue and directly supports Policy WE4 by maintaining the site's function as an international cricket ground and events location. The proposal also provides clear sporting, socio-economic and environmental benefits, supporting the continued operation of an established international sporting venue, associated local economic and employment benefits, and opportunities to host men's and women's cricket across a range of formats. The replacement system will also improve energy efficiency and control of light distribution through modern LED technology, helping to reduce energy consumption and minimise unnecessary light spill and glare.

For these reasons, the proposals represent an appropriate, necessary, and proportionate improvement to an established sporting facility and is considered to accord with the relevant provisions of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan and national planning policy.

Planning permission is therefore respectfully sought for the proposed replacement floodlighting installation.