

PITCH LIGHTING AT WIDE LANE SPORTS GROUND PLANNING STATEMENT

Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Planning Policy Framework	4
3.0	Planning Assessment	5
4.0	Construction Management Plan	6

1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement is prepared by Bidwells on behalf of the University of Southampton ('the applicant') to support a full planning application to Eastleigh Borough Council ('the Council').

The proposed description of development is:

Erection of lighting for sports facility permitted by planning permission F/23/95045 at Wide Lane, to include associated development.

The application site is located at the site of the University of Southampton Sports Ground, Wide Lane, Eastleigh, SO50 5PE.

1.1 The Site and Facility

The Wide Lane Sports Ground is located to the north of the M27 and to the west of Southampton Airport. Several sports grounds and playing fields sit to the west of the site. The application site is within the Sports Ground itself, in the vicinity of the sports pavilion building.

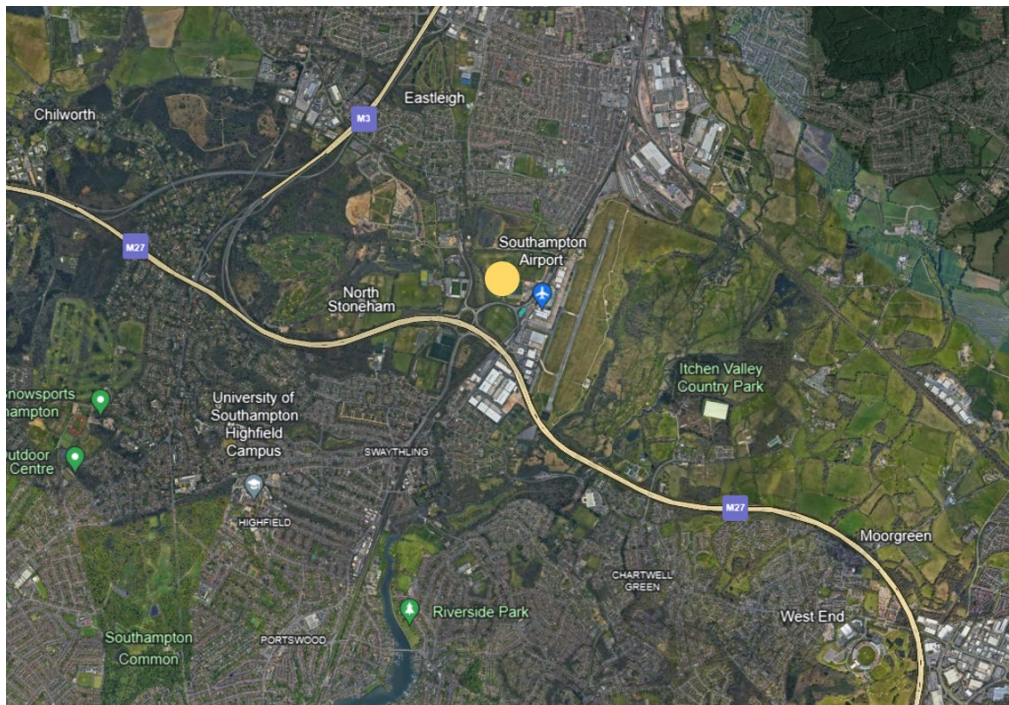




Figure 1.1. Location of Wide Lane Sports Ground

The main outdoor sports pitches for the University of Southampton are located at the Wide Lane Sports Ground. It is an established facility for University students, the community and public users. It is a well-used and popular facility that has benefited from significant investment in recent years.

1.2 Application Context

A full planning application for the “Installation of 2no. synthetic sports pitches, erection of fencing including new pedestrian access route, associated engineering operations, and landscaping” was approved by Eastleigh Borough Council on 4 August 2023 (ref: F/23/95045).

The University therefore have permission to install two artificial grass pitches (AGPs) on the site; one combined Football & Rugby pitch and one Football pitch. This application also included related below ground drainage works, fencing and ducts for an electricity supply to facilitate the installation of lighting at the new pitches.

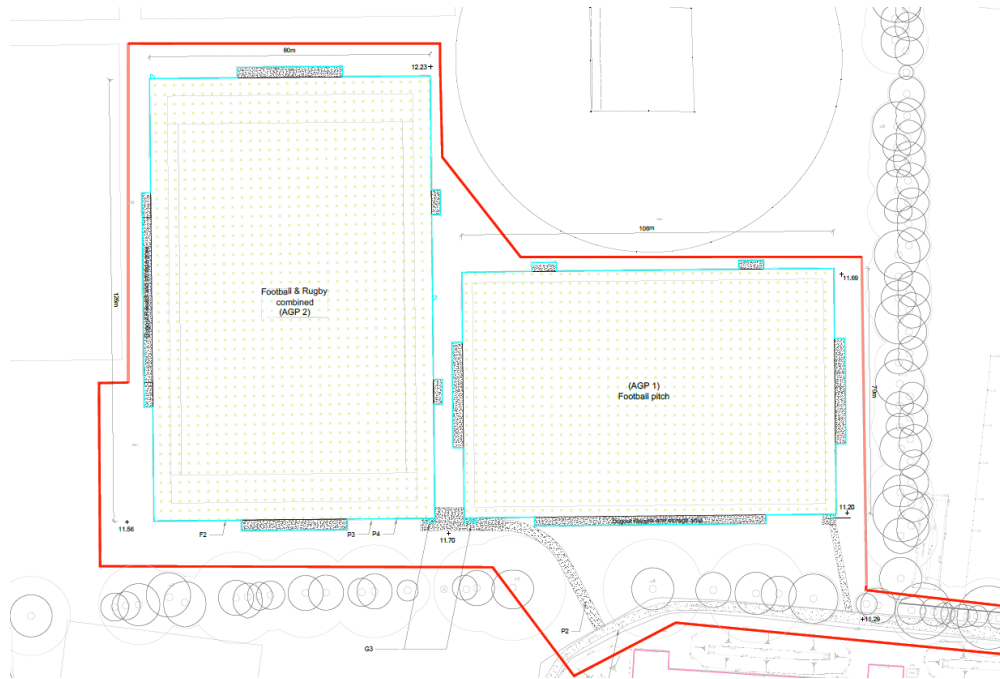


Figure 1.2. Approved site layout, following an NMA approved on 3 December 2023.

1.3 Proposed Development

The present application is for the installation of artificial lighting at the two new AGPs and low level path lighting along the route to these pitches. These works are closely associated with the development approved under application F/23/95045 and are required for the new pitches to be used effectively.

The ducts required for electricity supply to the lighting columns were included in application F/23/95045, so the current application scope is limited to the lighting columns and fixtures only.

As set out in the Planning Statement accompanying application F/23/95045, a split approach to the applications was discussed with Eastleigh Borough Council during pre-application discussions. This approach has allowed for the requisite bat surveys, needed to inform the lighting design, to be undertaken between May and October 2023, whilst not delaying the overall timeline for installing the pitches.

The pitch lighting is an integral part of the new AGPs; it is required for the pitches to be used to their full potential throughout the year. The justification for the installation of the new AGPs (as set out in application F/23/95045) relates to meeting demand from both University and community teams, especially during the winter months when the previous grass pitches would be waterlogged and unusable. The AGPs were justified as they will alleviate pressure on the facilities by enabling year-round play, allowing sporting activity to be more evenly spread across the year. The use of the new pitches by community sports teams will be formalised as part of a Community Use Agreement (required under condition 4 of F/23/95045). For the development of the new AGPs to be successful and generate the anticipated benefits, the pitches will require lighting. The lighting will facilitate the use of the pitches for extended hours, especially in the darker months of the year, so that year-round play is possible.

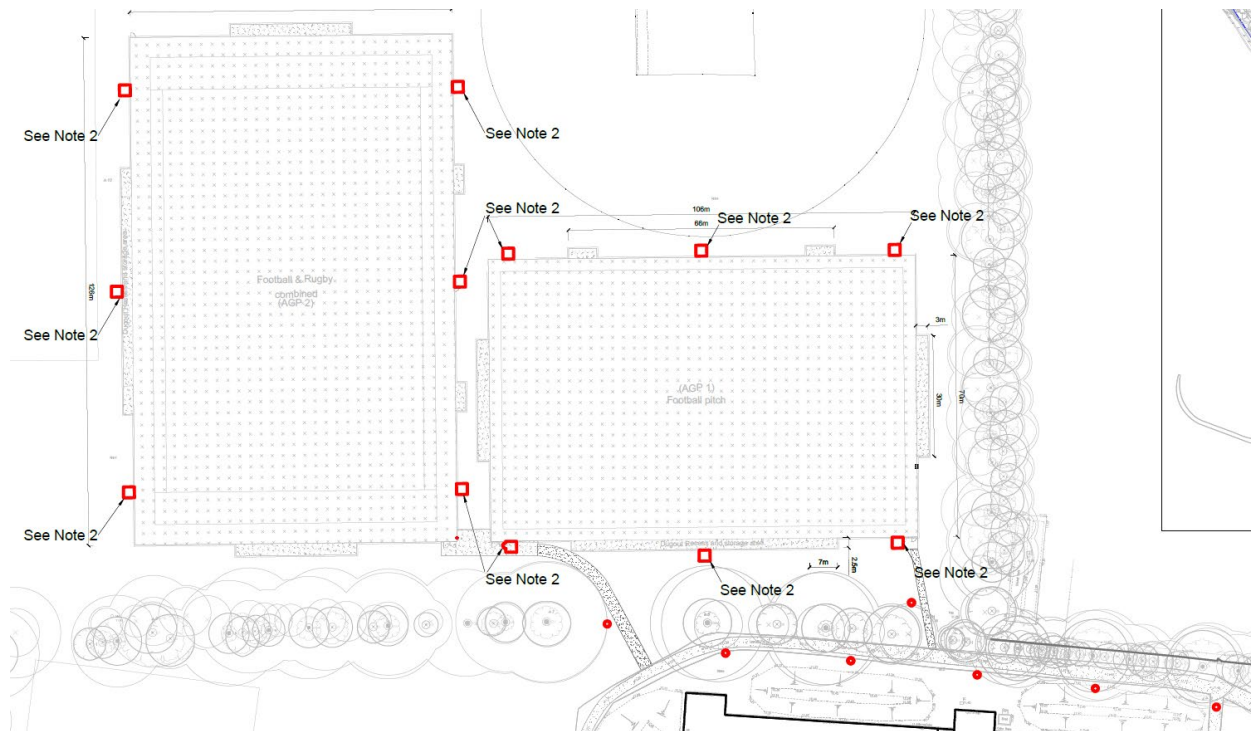


Figure 1.3. Site plan.

As shown above, the application is for the installation of 6 no. lighting columns at each pitch (12 no. in total). These columns will be up to 20 metres in height. The path to the pitches will be lit by 7 no. lower lighting columns.

2.0 Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036)

The Eastleigh Borough Council development plan is comprised of Eastleigh Borough Local Plan (2016-2036), which was adopted in April 2022. As part of the Local Plan, the site is subject to three designations:

- Settlement Gap
- Open Space
- Countryside

Given that the site is designated as 'countryside', Policy S5 (*New Development in the Countryside*) is applicable to the proposal. Policy S5 states that planning permission will be granted provided that it is related to outdoor recreation. Furthermore, S5 requires that development in the countryside will not have an adverse impact on the (rural) character of the landscape.

Policy S6 (*Settlement Gap*) requires that development in a settlement gap does not undermine the physical extent and/or visual separation of settlements and would not have an urbanising effect detrimental to the character of the countryside or the separate identity of the adjoining settlements.

Similarly, Policy DM34 (*New and Enhanced Recreation and Open Space Facilities*) stipulates that the enhancement of recreation and open space facilities will be permitted provided that in the countryside, development should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) represents up-to-date government planning policy and is a material consideration that must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application or appeal. This includes the presumption in favour of development found at paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

The section of the NPPF of particular relevance to this application is Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities (Paragraphs 96-107). Paragraph 97 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities such as sports venues to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments, and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community. Furthermore Paragraph 102 of the NPPF emphasises that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.

3.0 Planning Assessment

3.1 Countryside and Settlement Gap

Local Plan Policy S5 (*New Development in the Countryside*) requires that development in the countryside is related to outdoor recreation, and will not have an adverse impact on the rural character of the landscape.

The proposed lighting is required to facilitate outdoor sporting activity therefore the principle of the development is supported by Policy S5.

The existing character of the site is not considered to be rural. With Southampton Airport to the east, the M27 to the south and floodlit sports facilities to the west (e.g. Eastleigh Football Club), the setting of the site does not have a rural character. Furthermore, the site itself has existing buildings, fences and floodlighting that give the site an urban character. This was recognised in the delegated report for application F/23/95045. Given the existing character of the site is related to its sporting use, the proposal to enhance this existing use with additional floodlighting will not have an adverse impact on the character of the landscape.

It is important to note that diesel-generated portable floodlighting is currently in use at the Wide Lane site. In order to make use of the consented AGPs currently being installed at the site, these portable lights would likely be employed should a permanent solution not be agreed. The proposed permanent solution for lighting the pitches would not only ensure a higher quality playing environment for users, but constitutes a more environmentally sustainable electric alternative and has been subject to a detailed appraisal of ecological impacts.

Two relevant Local Plan policies refer to urbanising effects; Policy S6 (*Settlement Gap*) requires that development in a settlement gap does not undermine the physical extent and/or visual separation of settlements and would not have an urbanising effect detrimental to the character of the countryside or the separate identity of the adjoining settlements. Similarly, Policy DM34 (*New and Enhanced Recreation and Open Space Facilities*) stipulates that the enhancement of

recreation and open space facilities should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character.

The openness of the site is limited to a certain degree, due to the existing pavilion building, existing and consented fencing and existing floodlighting on the site. Whilst the proposed lighting columns comprise the addition of structures to the site, this would not materially affect the separation of settlements and therefore would not undermine the purpose of the settlement gap designation. As described above the urban, as opposed to rural, character of the site is recognised, and therefore the proposed lighting would not generate uncharacteristic urbanising effects. In the interests of ecological impact, light spill has been minimised as far as possible which limits any urbanising effect of the proposed lighting scheme.

3.2 Ecology

The site sits to the east of the Monks Brook watercourse and linear woodland, with trees also lining the south and east of the site. These areas were identified as a potential habitat for bats.

Section 5 of *Policy DM11: Nature Conservation*, states that development will not be permitted if it is likely to have a direct or indirect adverse effect on protected or priority species unless it can be demonstrated that: there are no alternative solutions; the adverse effects are unavoidable; measures are taken to mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects; there is an overall biodiversity net gain; and if there are any residual adverse effects, the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the adverse effects on priority habitats, priority and protected species, and the local ecological network.

A comprehensive suite of bat surveys undertaken between May and October 2023 have informed this application. The lighting proposal has been designed to minimise light spill on to the trees, with particular attention being given to the areas where light sensitive bats were identified.

4.0 Construction Management Plan

The proposed development is intended to be undertaken alongside the ongoing installation of the AGPs. The Planning Statement submitted as part of application F/23/95045 included a construction management plan, the principles of which are being adhered to throughout the whole construction process. The key elements of this are reproduced here to ensure that the part of the overall construction works associated with the proposed development will not affect the amenity of the site and wider area.

4.1 Strategy

Construction activity within the site would be limited and would be confined to the pitches and areas immediately adjacent. The proposed development is limited in scope and would not require import/export of soil to/from the site. Any soil arising at the site would be incorporated back into the ground.

Traffic movements during construction would be limited and can be accommodated using the existing site entrance.

4.2 Access

Access to/from the site would be taken off Wide Lane. Given the limited scope of the proposed development there would be a limited number of vehicle movements during construction. Parking

for contractors would be provided at the existing car park but the number of staff required would not exceed five in total.

Safety and direction signage would be provided at the site entrance and adjacent to construction activity/site compound to ensure that the safety of site users is not compromised. No additional protection would be provided for pedestrians and cyclists accessing the site, due to the low number of anticipated construction vehicles per day.

4.3 Machine and Materials Storage

A site compound would be erected within or adjacent to the application site. This would provide a secure location for storage of materials, machinery and equipment associated with construction of the proposed development.

The compound will be located away from the root protection area of the trees at the site.

4.4 Dust

There are not expected to be significant number of HGV movements to/from the site and it is not anticipated that wheel washing is generally necessary at the site. This may be introduced during periods of hot weather where work produces significant quantity of dust. Where construction occurs in periods of hot weather, appropriate dousing and dust mitigation measures will be taken.

4.5 Lighting and noise

It is not anticipated that flood lighting would be required during construction. Any lighting required would be localised and downward facing. Noise would be limited during construction and no mitigation measures are envisaged. No piling would be required.

4.6 Construction hours

Construction and delivery activities would take place during the following hours:

- Monday to Friday: 0800 - 1800
- Saturday: 0800 – 1300
- Sunday and public holidays: No construction activity

There may be the requirement for occasional construction or site setup activities outside these times but this will be limited in duration and scope.

4.7 Liaison and consultation

The appointed contractor would appoint a designated point of liaison for complaints and enquiries. The nominated person and their contact details would be advertised at the contractor site entrance.

Any complaints will be logged on site. The required actions will be different in each specific case, depending on the operation, equipment or location or applying additional controls. All complaints received under the scheme from any source will be recorded.

The contractor will stay in contact with the complainant until the site or company has investigated and responded to the complaint and until the company is satisfied that the site is adhering to the Site/Company Code of Practice, at which point the complaint will be taken off the 'active' list.

