

University of Southampton

University of Southampton Wide Lane Sports Ground

Floodlighting Proposals - Landscape & Visual Scoping Summary Report

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1. Non-Technical Summary

The Landscape & Visual Scoping Summary report provides a qualitative review of the possible impacts of proposed floodlighting at the Wide Lane Sports Ground on landscape character and visual receptors in and around the site. The application site is located within the Wide Lane Sports Ground on the A335 Wide Lane, Eastleigh, and adjacent to Southampton Airport and Southampton Airport Parkway station. The proposals include six 18m high floodlights positioned around each of the two new artificial pitches at the Ground.

The scoping methodology involved a desk-based review of legislation, policy and best practice guidance relevant to the landscape and visual context of the site. The application site is 6-8km away from the South Downs National Park and therefore the associated Dark Skies Technical Advice Note and South Downs Local Plan were carefully considered in this scoping study.

The landscape and visual context were established, and potential landscape and visual receptors identified. A winter day and night-time site visit was also undertaken to establish the baseline landscape character around the site and to understand the visibility, brightness and prominence of existing baseline lighting conditions in the landscape and in views at night. The potential sources of landscape and visual impacts during construction and operation were identified, with the duration of construction being approximately 6 weeks.

The scoping report concludes that no significant landscape or visual impacts on receptors are anticipated from the proposed lighting. Construction impacts on landscape character and visual receptors would be localised and temporary in nature. Operation impacts on landscape character would be localised in the landscape and in keeping with the existing character. Operational impacts on visual receptors during the night would be minimal as there is already substantial lighting in views and the proposed lighting would be largely screened by intervening vegetation. Therefore, it is proposed to scope out a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) for the planning submission and no further LVA methodology, mitigation or consultation is proposed.

2. Introduction

The purpose of this Landscape & Visual Scoping Summary report is to provide a qualitative review of the possible impact of proposed floodlighting at the Wide Lane sports ground on landscape character and visual receptors in and around the site.

The report has been prepared by landscape architects at Ove Arup and Partners Limited (Arup) with experience of assessing similar developments, with reference to current planning policy and best practice guidance.

The report provides the results of the landscape and visual scoping summary for the proposed lighting. The following guidance and information have been used to inform this landscape and visual scoping assessment:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013);
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, (Natural England, 2014);
- Assessing landscape value outside national designations, Technical Guidance Note 02/21, (Landscape Institute, 2021).

3. Proposed Development

The sports ground is located in Eastleigh and is bordered by Wide Lane to the east, the A335 to the south, Monks Brook to the west and Lakeside Country Park to the north. The site proposed for new lighting sits towards the centre of the Wide Lane Sports Ground. A total of three existing grass pitches, including two football (youth/ training only) and one rugby pitch will be replaced by two artificial pitches. Floodlighting is proposed on 12 No. lighting columns, i.e. six around each pitch.

All proposed floodlighting columns are maximum 18m in height, slender in shape and have a galvanised finish. The floodlights are mounted at the top of the mast and are fitted with cowls and aimed to avoid direct upward light. A residual glow of 10-15% reflected light is anticipated depending on the reflectance properties of the playing surface. The existing floodlights are currently 5,250K which reflect a cool, white glow. In contrast to the proposed floodlights which are 3,000K and will reflect a warmer, yellow glow.

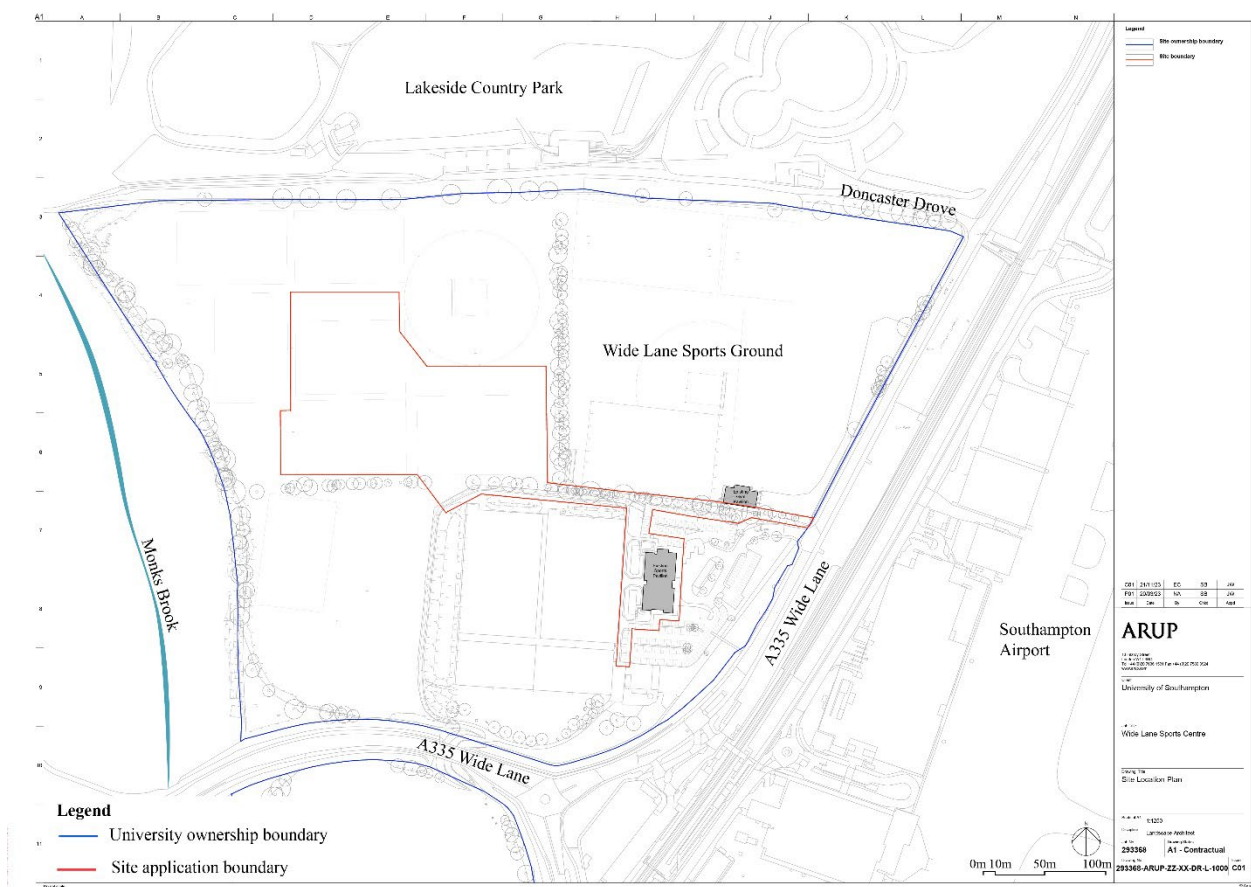


Figure 1 Site plan showing context of Wide Lane sports ground with site application boundary

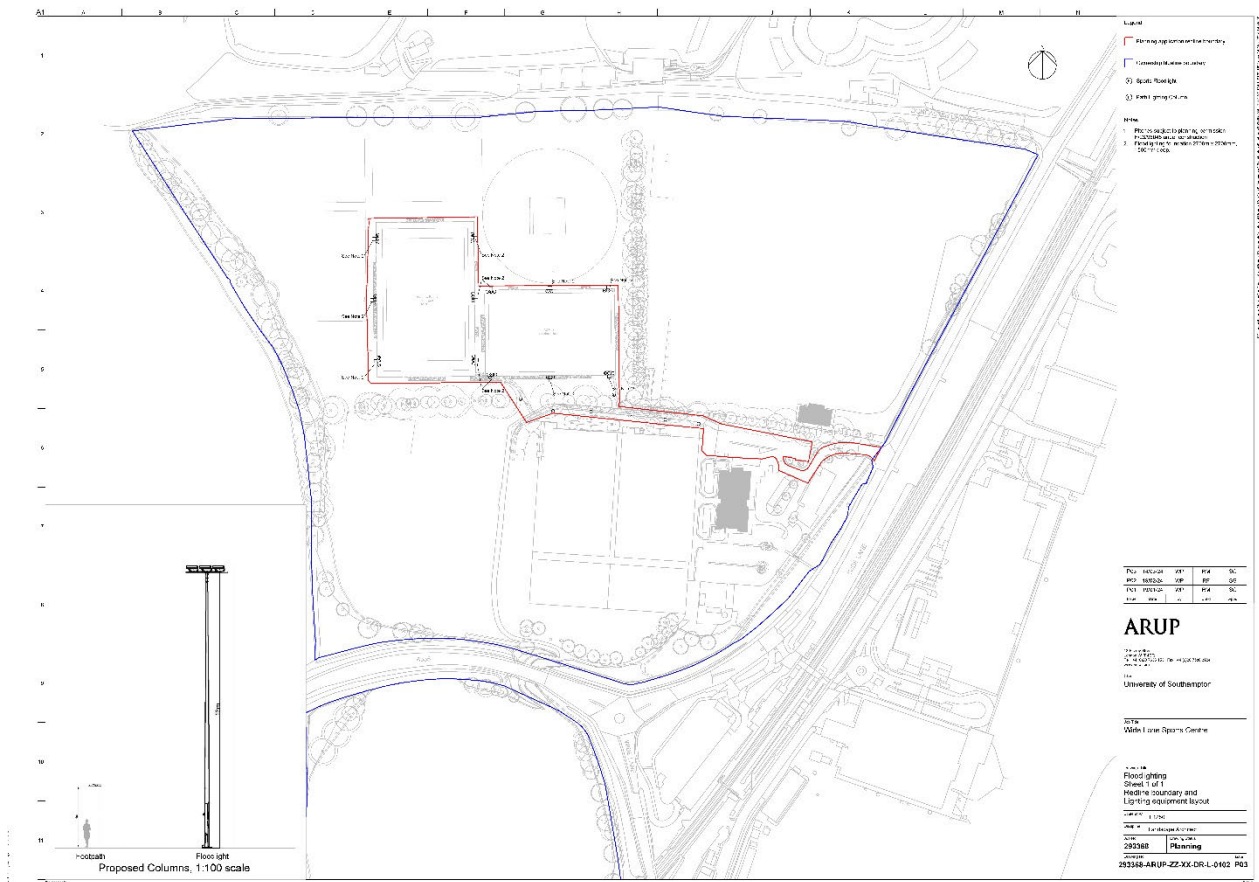


Figure 2 Proposed Flood lighting location plan

4. Legislative Policy and Guidance Context

This section provides an overview of legislation, policy and best practice guidance that is relevant to landscape and visual context of the site, and which has been considered for scoping.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was prepared by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and was first adopted in March 2012. It has been revised multiple times since and most recently in December 2023. The NPPF contains a full statement of the Government's current policy position for England.

Chapter 12 of NPPF relates to good design and its importance to planning policies and decisions. Paragraph 137 sets out the Government's design objectives, and states that planning policies and designs should ensure new developments take into account views of the community.

Chapter 15 of NPPF relates to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 180 highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).

South Downs Local Plan, adopted 2 July 2019 (2014-33)

The Site is approximately 6-8km away from the nearest boundary to the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The policies summarised below are relevant to this scoping exercise:

- Strategic Policy SD4: Landscape Character – Development proposals will only be permitted where they conserve and enhance landscape character by demonstrating that:
 - They are informed by landscape character, reflecting the context and type of landscape in which the development is located;
 - The design, layout and scale of proposals conserve and enhance existing landscape and seascape character features which contribute to the distinctive character, pattern and evolution of the landscape;
 - They will safeguard the experiential and amenity qualities of the landscape.
- Strategic Policy SD5: Design – Development proposals will only be permitted where they adopt a landscape-led approach and respect the local character, through sensitive and high-quality design that makes a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the area. The following design principle should be adopted as appropriate:
 - Integrate with, respect and sympathetically complement the landscape character by ensuring development proposals are demonstrably informed by an assessment of the landscape context
- Strategic Policy SD8: Dark Night Skies – Development proposals will be permitted where they conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies and the integrity of the Dark Sky Core as shown on the Policies Map.

South Downs National Park – Dark Skies Technical Advice Note (TAN)

The South Downs National Park – Dark Skies TAN report outlines best practice for good installation of lighting:

- New lighting should not adversely degrade the sky quality beyond the immediate area to be lit
- Angle Lights Downward – no unnecessary light above or near the horizontal
- Lamps above 500 lumens should be installed in dark sky friendly fixtures that prevent unnecessary upward light

- Point where the light is needed not in a direction that causes a nuisance to neighbours or wildlife
- Switch off when not needed. Use proximity sensors. Avoid dusk-till-dawn sensors
- Light to the appropriate illuminance – do not over light needlessly
- Avoid bright white and cooler temperature LEDs
- Install at the lowest possible height to achieve lighting levels

Dark skies are beneficial to both communities and wildlife. In May 2016, the South Downs was awarded International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) status to reflect the quality of skies and the commitment the national park and its partners in assessing light pollution. The IDSR takes in the entire South Downs National Park (SDNP) boundary with a critical core and buffer zone base where the darkest skies are found. Figure 3. below shows the dark skies designation with the E1b Transition Zone, between intrinsic rural darkness and urban areas at the western edge. This is 6km from the Site, shown as a red dot.

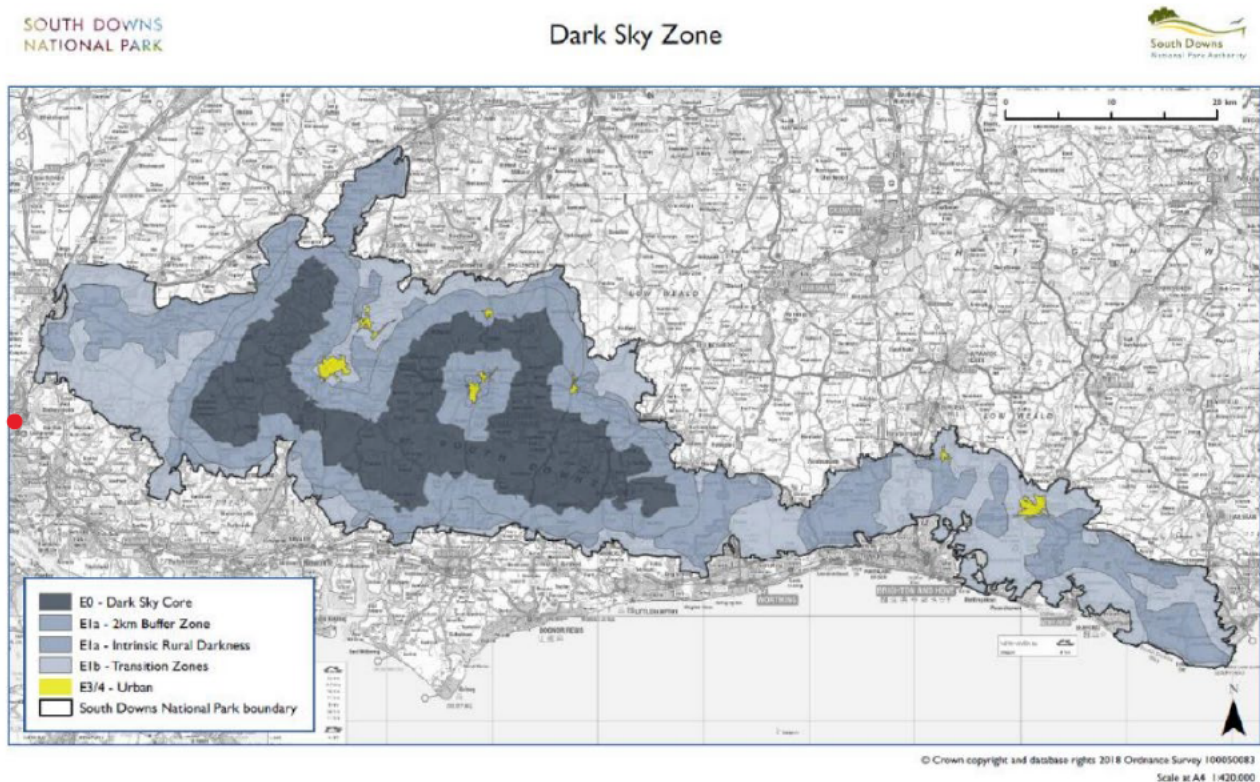


Figure 3 showing the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve (Dark Zones) in proximity to the Site (Image source: South Downs National Park Dark Skies Technical Note Version 2, May 2021, <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DNS-TAN-2021-accessibility.pdf>)

Eastleigh Borough Local Plan, adopted April 2022 (2016-2036)

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan was adopted in April 2022. The below policy is relevant to this scoping exercise and is summarised below:

- DM34 (New and enhanced recreation and open space facilities) – Development should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character

5. Scoping Assessment Methodology

The scoping methodology involved firstly a desk-based review of data sources listed in Section 1.3.2 and the establishment of the study area. The landscape and visual context were then established, and the sensitive landscape and visual receptors were identified. This was followed by a site visit, at dusk, on Monday 22nd January 2024 to verify the desk study and finalise the baseline.

The baseline lighting conditions were established by considering visibility, brightness and prominence of the actual source of lighting within and around the study area together with comments on light spill and sky glow. Qualitative descriptions on the general after-dark nature of existing lighting in the area were also made rather than quantitative descriptions on the types and levels of lighting within it.

Interactive satellite maps of England's dark skies, produced by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), were also used to help ascertain existing light levels.

Finally, the proposed lighting parameters including the indicative site boundary and project description were reviewed before the potential impacts of construction and operation were appraised to identify the likelihood for significant landscape and visual effects.

There are important differences between landscape and visual effects and so these have therefore been assessed and reported separately. The following distinctions have been made:

Landscape effects relate to changes to the landscape as a resource, including physical changes to the fabric or individual elements of the landscape, its aesthetic or perceptual qualities, and landscape character. At night, this relates to changes, by the introduction of artificial lighting, that may change or erode the sense of tranquillity or remoteness in an intrinsically dark area.

Visual effects relate to changes to existing views of identified visual receptors ('people'), from the loss or addition of landscape features within their view due to the proposed development. At night, this relates to occupiers of residential properties or students staying overnight in schools; or residents staying in hotels and healthcare institutions. These receptors are the most sensitive to additional lighting. Other receptors will not be considered on the basis that either they would generally not be experiencing the view at night (e.g. recreational) or their immediate context would be brightly lit if they were present at night (e.g. employment / formal sports).

The location of the visual receptors has been defined by desk-based study and site visit only without the creation of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping due to the small-scale nature of the proposals.

6. Baseline Environment

This section describes the landscape and visual baseline environment and identifies key receptors against which the proposed lighting has been assessed for the scoping exercise.

6.1 Existing Baseline

National Character Area

Natural England has divided England into 159 National Character areas (NCA) profiles, recognising the combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity that make places distinctive.

At a national level, the Site is located within NCA 75: South Hampshire Lowlands which is a low-lying plain between the chalk hills of the Hampshire and South Downs and Southampton Water. Its highest point is an outlying chalk ridge, Portsdown Hill, but the bedrock geology is mostly open marine, estuarine and freshwater Tertiary deposits.

Local Character Area

The landscape character of Eastleigh was assessed in 1997 for the preparation of Landscape Character Assessment for Eastleigh Borough. The assessment identified 19 local landscape character areas.

The proposed lighting site falls within the Eastleigh Borough Local Landscape Character Area 5: Itchen Valley Sports Pitches. The character area is described as ‘a flat landscape lying on a gravel terrace and is divided by prominent tree belts of poplars, pine and native species. The land use is predominantly recreational with many sport pitches joined together in groups enclosed by rows of trees... In the south, the influence of the M27 is conspicuous over a wide area. Maturing planting is present to help mitigate the motorway’s intrusive effects, although recent Highway Agency works around Junction 5 have reduced the level of tree screening. Eastleigh Football Club is located west of the motorway junction and is used as a formal recreation ground with carparking, lighting and facilities.



Figure 4 illustrating landscape character area boundary with site and receptor locations within the boundary (*Not to scale*)

Site Character Area

The Site is a sports ground consisting of existing floodlight sports pitches, including football, rugby and two cricket pitches. The Site is bordered in the east by Southampton Airport a landscape that is runway and grassland with the main airport buildings located along the A355 road. Southampton Airport Parkway is located at the southern end of Wide Lane and consists of a low-lying railway station with associated carparking and lighting columns. The northern edge of the site is adjacent to the Lakeside Country Park, an area of open grassland with areas of deciduous woodland and a medium-sized lake located in the western area of the park. A residential estate stretches along the northern edge of the park. The southern edge of the site is bordered by the M27 Junction 5 which is well-light and partially screened by mature tree planting.

The western edge of the site is bordered by Monks Brook and Stoneham Lane road. Additional sports grounds and clubs, including Eastleigh Football Club, are situated between Stoneham Lane and North Stoneham Park, an area of gently sloping landform sectioned with hedges, fencing and horse paddocks. These landscape features are all contained within a separate Landscape Character Area 6: North Stoneham Park.

Existing light levels are rated as '8-16 Nanowatts' within the CPRE satellite maps. Out of nine colour bands with 9 being the brightest, 8-16 Nanowatts is within colour band 7 which is the third highest rating for light level pollution in dark skies.

6.2 Visual receptors

Potential visual receptors likely to experience views of the proposed lighting were identified through desktop study and site visit and subsequently categorised into the following groups:

Viewpoint 1: Lakeside Country Park recreational users

During the day users of the country park have intermittent views of the sports ground to the south through dense tree and shrub planting along the boundary of Doncaster Drove. Immediate views are of an open grassed landscape with lakes and clumps of deciduous trees. Long distance views are restricted by boundaries of vegetation on all sides.

There are intermittent distant views of existing flood lighting columns through the trees within the country park.

Viewpoint 2: Recreational users along Doncaster Drove PRow and running south along Lakeside Country Park

Recreational users along the PRow have views of a dense mature trees line running along the edge of the Sports Ground and open views across the Lakeside Country Park. There are limited gaps in the vegetation where the Sports Ground is visible.

There are intermittent distant views of existing floodlighting columns through dense tree and scrub planting lining Doncaster Drove.

Viewpoint 3: Drivers travelling along the A335 Wide Lane

The A335 Wide Lane road is a single carriageway extending in a north-south direction. There are views east to a single row of mature deciduous tree planting that borders the Southampton Airport facilities. Views west also include a mature belt of deciduous tree planting before this transitions into views onto Wide Lane Sports Ground where hedge planting is lower.

At night, there are intermittent views of existing floodlights above hedgerow and tree planting along Wide Lane. The view is also well lit by street lighting lining the western edge of Wide Lane and extending from the motorway junction northwards into Eastleigh. Intermittent carpark lighting in the Southampton Parkway Carpark, adjacent to Southampton Airport is also visible through a single line of mature deciduous tree planting between the carpark and Wide Lane.

Viewpoint 4: Residents along Ambassador Walk facing south towards the Site

Foreground views south towards the Site consist of low-lying allotments, as part of the Lakeside Country Park, and open grassland. Patches of mature trees and dense vegetation are growing in the background with a line of tall trees marking the edge between the country park and Wide Lane sports ground.

At night, existing floodlighting is perceptible at specific vantage points towards the east where there are gaps in the dense tree planting lining Ambassador Walk. There is some combined glow in the southern distance from Southampton Airport, the M27 motorway junction and streetlighting along the A335 Wide Lane.

Viewpoint 5: Residents on Weston Way looking east towards Stoneham Lane

Foreground views are heavily screened by dense, mature tree planting lining the western edge of Stoneham Lane.

At night, lighting within the Wide Lane sports ground is not visible and there is a residual glow from Southampton Airport, partly screened by mature tree planting along the eastern edge of Stoneham Lane and by patches of deciduous woodland within Lakeside Country Park.

7. Potential Impacts

This section identifies the potential for significant impacts in relation to the construction and operation of the proposed flood lighting.

7.1 Construction

The potential sources of landscape and visual impacts during construction of the proposed lighting would include:

- Pouring of foundation and allow concrete curing time
- Trenching exercise for cabling to lighting masts (likely to be minimal due to existing cable ducting)
- Erect lighting column masts
- Install and commission floodlights.

The duration of the construction will be approximately 6 weeks.

Landscape

Construction impacts on landscape character would be very localised in the landscape and temporary in nature. No significant construction impacts on landscape character are anticipated and are therefore scoped out of further assessment in this report.

Visual

Construction impacts on visual receptors will be minimal, temporary and localised to the Wide Lane Sports Ground. No significant visual impacts on landscape receptors are anticipated and are therefore scoped out of further assessment in this report.

7.2 Operation

The potential sources of landscape and visual impacts during operation of the proposed lighting would include:

- New (18m) floodlight columns, which will be taller than the existing (on account of the floodlit area being larger)
- Warm-white colour temperature light sources (with low blue wavelength light compared to existing floodlights)
- Floodlights fitted with upward light limiting cowls to minimise sky glow
- Floodlight aiming to limit direct light spill towards trees (on the north and west boundaries)
- Lighting controls to provide lower, 50%, lighting level for daily use. Higher level lighting only for competition use.
- Pathway lighting is certified by the International Dark-sky Association.

Landscape

Operation impacts on landscape character would be very localised in the landscape and in keeping with the existing character. No significant operation impacts on landscape character are anticipated and are therefore scoped out of further assessment in this report.

Visual

Operational impacts on visual receptors during the night at viewpoints 1-2 (recreational) have been discounted as these users will not be experiencing the views at night and the additional lighting columns will not change the views in the day.

Operational impacts on visual receptors during the day and night at Viewpoint 3 (Wide Lane) would be minimal as there is already substantial lighting in the view.

Operational impacts on visual receptors at viewpoints 4 and 5 would also be minimal as they are located 400-500m away from the proposed lighting and Wide Lane Sports Ground is largely screened by intervening vegetation.

No significant landscape or visual impacts on receptors are anticipated from the proposed lighting and are therefore scoped out of further assessment in this report.

8. Scoping Summary

Table 1 below summarises the potential construction and operation impacts relevant to the landscape and visual assessment proposed to be scoped in or out of the scoping report.

Topic aspect (potential impact)	Construction	Operation	Survey requirements
Changes to landscape character	Scoped out	Scoped out	N/A
Changes to views and visual amenity	Scoped out	Scoped out	N/A

Table 1 Scoping summary for landscape and visual assessment

It is proposed to scope out a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) for the planning submission and therefore no further LVA methodology, mitigation or consultation is proposed.