

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/24/96865

Site Address: THE WIDE LANE PAVILION, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
SPORTS GROUND, WIDE LANE, EASTLEIGH, SO50 5PE

Case Officer: Rachael Morris

Description: Erection of floodlighting and associated development.

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Aviation Safeguarding • Wider site is partial within flood zone 2 • Open Space • Countryside • Settlement Gap • HCC Minerals Safeguarding • Tree Preservation Order(s)		

Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Z/29361/000/00 - Outline: Retail and Leisure Developments (23,225 sq. m) – Refuse – Jul 1987 • Z/29362/000/00 - Outline: Retail and Leisure Developments (37,160 sq. m.) – Refuse – Jul 1987 • Z/11560/002/00 - Erection of sports club & changing rooms – Refuse – Sept 1975 • Z/04511/003/00 - new access road to sports ground - replacement of existing access – Permit – Jul 1980 • Z/08767/016/00 - Retention of Changing Rooms, Toilets and Groundsman Store – Temporarily approve – Aug 1986 • Z/08767/020/00 - Outline: Development of University Campus – Refuse – Mar 1992 • Z/08767/024/00 - Siting of 3no. Temporary Office Buildings, 2no. Generators, 1no. Water Irrigation Tank, Automatic Barrier Entry System and Flood Lighting - Temporarily approve – Jun 2003 • Z/08767/025/00 - Construction of 2no. Synthetic turf pitches with fencing and floodlighting, 8no. Tennis courts with fencing and floodlighting, remodelling of car park to accommodate 240 cars and 5 coaches, erection of new pavilion and steward's living accommodation – Permit – Oct 2003 • X/05/54885 - Part relief of conditions No.35 and No.27 of planning permission 08767/025 to allow the use of 100 parking spaces for BAA staff - Temporarily approve – Oct 2005 • A/14/75683 - Display of 1no. Non illuminated dual aspect 'V' free standing sign following removal of existing – Consent to advert display – Feb 2015 • F/23/95045 - Installation of 2no. synthetic sports pitches, erection of fencing including new pedestrian access route, associated engineering operations and landscaping – Permit – Aug 2023 • F/23/95405 - Three-year temporary siting of a container hosting a battery energy storage system with associated solar panels and micro wind turbine on roof – Temporarily Approve – Sept 2023		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☒	Newspaper ☐
Representations:	17 Meadow Grove. Objection. Currently, existing lighting has been left on during hours of darkness with no activities taking place on site. This contravenes EBC environmental policies. EBC need to apply controlled times the lighting can be switched on and, times it must be switched off.		
Parish Council:	No Comment		

Ecology:	<u>08/04/2024:</u> There are no designated sites of Nature Conservation value that will be directly impacted these proposals. There is a line of woody scrub running north/south located at the western edge of the sports ground. This is listed as priority habitat and is associated with a ditch line. Slightly further west again lies the Monks Brook stream corridor with associated vegetation. Given the linear nature of these wooded features and the linkage they provide to Lakeside Country Park to the north it was flagged early in the pre application phase that bat activity survey work should be undertaken. The bat survey work undertaken by John Wenman identified an assemblage of five species of bat which is fairly typical for this type of urban edge setting with linear landscape features. The key features on site are the wooded edge along the west and north with supporting use of the tree line to the south of the site location. The northern woodland boundary is particularly important for a number of the species but most notably Noctules. No specific roosts were identified but given the timings of emergence it is likely that noctules and pipistrelles and roosting in the vicinity of the sports pitches. In the absence of any mitigation the addition of floodlighting could have a negative impact on bats and their use of the site. A lighting impact report with associated overspill drawings has been produced by Hailiday Lighting. The mitigations aims include: • Louvres/baffles fitted to reduce spill • Curfew timers • Minimise lightspill above column height • Limit lightspill onto adjacent habitats to 1 lux • Maintenance factor of 1 for ecological assessment Section 4 in the lighting strategy sets out the initial recommendations for mitigation that were discussed at the pre-application stage versus what it has been possible to achieve. All mitigation factors have been designed in apart from the need to limit light spill to 1lux on all habitats and the luminaire colour temperature. In terms of the lightspill and luminaire, efforts have been made to get as close to achieving this as possible without compromising use of the pitch or the bat usage of the site. When combined with other mitigation measures (curfew timers and the fact most floodlighting will be required in winter when bats are hibernating) and the fact there is no lightspill at all to the northern boundary (where the majority of bat activity is) I am satisfied that the proposals are unlikely to have a significant impact on bat activity or roosts on and adjacent to the site. I raise no objection to this application subject to the lighting being installed to the specifications described in the lighting report and the recommendations in both the bat report and lighting report being secured as a condition of any permission. <u>04/03/2024:</u> There are two corridors designated as priority habitat in this area (lowland mixed deciduous woodland and other chalk rivers). The western area of the site is included in the Itchen Valley (09) biodiversity opportunity area. Lakeside Country Park is located to the north of the site. The proposed floodlights have the potential to illuminate the wooded areas to the west, to the south, to the east, along any paths and along the entrance road. Any wildlife corridors including hedgerows, lines of trees or shrubs, and the Monks Brook corridor must be kept dark. The bat survey information and details of the lighting design as it affects bats must be submitted with this application. The Floodlighting plan/lighting equipment layout by Arup (P02, February 2024) does not
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	provide the lighting specifications or any information about light levels, shielding, or light spillage. As also requested by Sport England, a lighting plan with modelled lux levels is required. The lighting must meet the guidelines specified in Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting Institution of Lighting Professionals (theilp.org.uk).
Tree Officer:	No Objection
Leisure Services Manager:	No comment
Planning Policy:	No comment
Environmental Health:	We now understand that excavated soils are to be disposed off-site. Can the applicant provide confirmation of this after works are completed (in the form of waste transfer notes or similar). In regards safeguards to surface waters and unexpected contamination, we expect that the applicant keep vigilant in the event of any issues on these matters arises.
Landscape:	<u>11/04/2024</u>: The explanation of possible increased light spill if shorter 15m high light columns were used (due to the need to tilt the lights) is understood. As regards the LVIA work, it is a shame that no potential longer distance views were photographed at night, however, set within the context of other light sources in the surrounding area I acknowledge that any increased nocturnal impact will be negligible. <u>28/03/2024</u>: I have reviewed this document and agree that the landscape character of the site cannot be said to be either rural or unspoilt Countryside. Southampton Airport lies to the east, the M27 to the south and existing sports facilities to the west. The openness of the site is already reduced by the existing pavilion building, existing and consented fencing and the existing portable floodlighting on the site. Whilst the proposed 18m high lighting columns comprise additional structures on the site, they would not materially affect the separation of settlements and therefore would not undermine the Settlement Gap. It is important to note that there are existing floodlit sports pitches nearby to the west. The main potential landscape impacts will arise during hours of darkness when the floodlights are switched on. It is relevant that the proposed floodlighting will not be a completely new element in the wider nocturnal scene. There are some concerns with regard the potential impact of the new floodlights on Itchen Valley to the west and Lakeside Country Park located approximately 300m to the north. The proposed floodlights have the potential to illuminate the wooded areas to the west, to the south and to the east. As such it will be important that the height of any floodlights are reduced as far as is possible. Referring to the FA Guide on floodlighting, it may be that the light columns could be reduced to 15m. A reduction in height would certainly help reduce potential longer distance visual impacts. It appears that longer distant views have not been considered. This is strange as the 18m high columns could well be visible in some mid-distance views. Please ask the applicant if any longer distance views have been checked at all.
HCC Highways:	Having reviewed the information, it can be confirmed that there is no objection to the proposals from a Local Highway (HCC) perspective. Light spill is not anticipated to reach the Local highway, and given the presence of screening (trees and bushes) and that the nearest local highways are not in elevated positions, it would not be anticipated that the lighting will cause glare or distraction to passing road users.
HCC Archaeologist:	No Objection

Southampton Airport:	The proposed development has been examined from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective and does not conflict with safeguarding criteria. We, therefore, have no objection to this proposal. Given the nature of the proposed development it is possible that a crane may be required during its construction. We would, therefore, draw the applicant's attention to the requirement within the British Standard Code of Practice for the safe use of Cranes, for crane operators to consult the aerodrome before erecting a crane in close proximity to an aerodrome. This is explained further in Advice Note 4 – Cranes (available at https://www.aoa.org.uk/policycampaigns/operations-safety/).
Sport England:	Sport England is supportive of the proposal for permanent sports lighting as it will enable the use of the AGP facilities to be maximised including for community use. Sport England has consulted with the relevant national governing bodies for sport, the FA/Football Foundation and the RFU, and we have received the following comments. The FA/Football Foundation comments that the Lighting Impact Report details that the proposed installation is compliant with The FA Guide to Floodlighting (average maintained level of >200lux, with uniformity >0.60) and therefore technically compliant. The FF accepts that the installation of lighting (also referenced within the original planning application (F/23/95045) for the artificial pitches) will result in intensified use of the site. The RFU welcomes the intent to construct permanent lighting for the AGPs in order to realise the full potential of the site. The RFU comments that the emerging Eastleigh Borough Council PPS suggests that at least three local rugby clubs (Eastleigh RFC, Trojans FC and Locksheath Pumas RFC) are in need of additional midweek training capacity that could potentially be partially/fully addressed by this scheme. Further to local usage the transport links and location of the site central to Hampshire could potentially create a partial solution to wider match play congestion issues across the county (see design note below). The RFU comments that the applicant is advised that the scheme should be constructed in line with the RFU Floodlight Installation & Management Guide, with particular reference to the recommended LUX and uniformity levels. With reference to the 'Lighting Impact Report & Overspill Readings' document, p3 makes an assumption that the most likely rugby usage will be for training. Given the pitch dimensions support the use of the surface for match play the RFU suggests that the applicant consider the potential for floodlit match play, and the associated implications on LUX and uniformity levels. Sport England considers that the proposal will not adversely impact the playing field or pitches at the site. Conversely, the proposal will increase opportunities for the 2no. AGP facilities to be used by both the university and other community clubs/groups/programmes. On that basis, Sport England considers that the application is capable of meeting our E2 exception. This states: <i>The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.</i> Given the above, Sport England raises no objection to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 2 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 103 of the NPPF.
National Highways:	National Highways recommends that a condition is attached to any planning permission that may be granted for the planning application ref: F/24/96865.

Natural England:	No comment

Site Visit:	Yes ☒	No ☐
Details: 06/03/2023		

Policy:

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

Development Plan:

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 The most relevant policies are Strategic policies S1, S2, S5 and S6; and Development Management policies DM1, DM6, DM11, DM13, DM14, DM32 and DM34.

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Quality Places; Residential Parking Standards; Character Area Appraisals.

Assessment:

Site location

- Wide Lane is a multi-sport site with provision for a variety of sports including football, cricket, rugby, hockey, netball and tennis. The existing facility mix includes 2no. floodlit artificial grass pitches (1 3G and 1 sand based) and 8 floodlit tennis courts. Permission was granted last year for 2no. Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) sports pitches to accommodate football and rugby.
- The site caters predominantly for student usage from the University of Southampton (UoS), however there is also a mix of community use, with local clubs and organisations benefiting from the onsite facilities. In addition to the external facilities, there is a clubhouse with changing provision.
 - Funding was provided by EBC and the Football Foundation in 2005 to enhance the quality of the clubhouse. This was aligned to a 20-year agreement to develop community sport at Wide Lane. Additionally, in 2020 EBC made available further investment to install 2no. non-turf cricket wickets. This funding was aligned to an 8-year agreement to make cricket pitches available for community use.

Policy and principle

- The site lies within open space, countryside and local gap, as identified in the adopted 2016-2036 Eastleigh Borough Local Plan. While assessing this scheme, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Eastleigh Borough Council Sports Facilities Needs Assessment & Playing Pitch Strategy Update (2017) (PPS) has also been referred to.
- Key policies taken from the adopted local plan in the determination of this application are:
 - Policy S1, Delivering sustainable development
 - Policy S5, New development in the countryside
 - Policy S6, Protection of settlement gaps
 - Policy DM1, General criteria for new development
 - Policy DM6, Sustainable surface water management and watercourse management
 - Policy DM11, Nature Conservation
 - DM13, General development criteria – transport
 - DM14, Parking
 - DM32, Protection of recreation and open space facilities
 - DM34, New and enhanced recreation and open space facilities

- Paragraphs 98 and 99 in the National Planning Policy Framework reference open space and recreation. “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”
- Paragraph 191 in the National Planning Policy Framework states that “planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should: ... limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”
- In the previous application at this site for 2.no synthetic pitches, due to the lack of proposed floodlighting, the officer’s report noted that there is diesel generated floodlighting currently on site which could be used for the undisclosed period while floodlighting is absent. Although, this is not an ideal situation due to the environmental implications a diesel generator creates. This application seeks the permanent siting of floodlighting for the pitches previously approved under F/23/95045.

Proposed floodlighting

- The site is in the countryside and within the settlement gap between Eastleigh and Southampton.
- Policy DM34 in the adopted Local Plan supports the provision of new recreation and open space facilities or uses, and enhancements to existing, providing they meet the criteria in the policy. In accordance with policy DM34, development should not involve structures and floodlighting that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character.
- Floodlighting is not a structure supported in open space policy when also in the designated countryside. Nonetheless, it is noted that the character of the site is not typical of that commonly associated with the countryside due to the presence of existing floodlighting, a pavilion building, synthetic pitches and the associated infrastructure such as fencing and car parking.
- Within planning application Z/08767/025/00, a planning condition required the floodlighting only to be in operation between the hours of 2pm and 10pm to minimise impact on the countryside/settlement gap. This will be re-applied here to ensure consistency across the site and ensure the purpose of this previous condition is not undermined.
- Although set within the countryside, the urbanising impact this development proposes is not to a detrimental extent. Floodlighting is currently already seen within the site and accords with the site’s character. The proposed floodlighting would not create an unacceptably urbanising impact and would not undermine the visual openness of the strategic gap. Therefore, the proposals do not conflict with the principles of strategic policies S5 and S6.
- Sport England have not objected to the lighting, stating it accords with their E2 exception which requires the proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Other material considerations

- The 2017 PPS does not identify the need for additional artificial grass pitches at Wide Lane, however as mentioned it is expected that the new PPS will provide an up to date and robust evidence of need. Since the Playing Pitch Strategy publication in 2017, a number of AGP projects have come to fruition, all with community use. This includes the triple (parklife) AGP site at Stoneham Lane/Monksbrook as well as new football AGPs at Deer Park secondary school and Wyvern College/school. In total, 5.no new full-size football 3G AGPs have come forward since the 2017 PPS was published and a further 2.no were approved at Wide Lane last year.

Climate Change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality by 2025; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030; (c) ensure that the Council's procurement policy recognises carbon neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 and the supporting Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF, development plan and adopted local plan policy do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and local plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted local plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

Equalities Implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equality implications

Conclusion:

Recommendation:

PERMIT ☒

REFUSE ☐

Comments ...