

52/14/0012

MR EVANS

ERECTION OF 6 FLOODLIGHTS TO ILLUMINATE SPORTS PITCH AT QUEENS COLLEGE, TRULL ROAD, COMEYTROWE

Location: QUEENS COLLEGE, TRULL ROAD, TAUNTON, TA1 4QS

Grid Reference: 321593.123059

Full Planning Permission

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

(A4) DrNo CC4217 02 Philips Floodlights
(A1) DrNo GTB-PO-17-1 Proposed Lighting

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The floodlighting hereby permitted shall be illuminated only between the hours of 14:00 and 21.30 Monday to Saturday and not at any times on Sundays and only in the months of October to March inclusive.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area and to protect the amenities of nearby dwellings in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy and as stated in the submitted application.

4. The floodlighting scheme hereby permitted shall be implemented fully in accordance with the details and specifications set out in the design and access statement with accompanying Philips Lighting document received 28 March 2014 and shall thereafter be retained as such.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area and to protect the amenities of nearby dwellings in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

5. (i) Before any part of the permitted development is in use, a landscaping scheme, which shall include details of the species, siting and numbers to be planted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- (ii) The scheme shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development, or as otherwise extended with the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority.
- (iii) For a period of five years after the completion of each landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and has negotiated amendments to the application to enable the grant of planning permission.
2. The landscaping scheme should include some trees and higher growing shrubs.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the installation of six pole mounted floodlights to illuminate an existing all weather sports pitch. The columns are shown to be 14m in height and approx 430mm in diameter at the base, with each having three luminaires at the top of each column. The column in the south east corner, closest to the adjoining residential properties, will have an 'optiviso' fitted which will ensure light is directed even more accurately so as to avoid any spillage towards the adjoining residential properties. The lighting report shows the lighting to be focused on the pitch itself with little light spill outside the pitch. The application proposes that the lights will be available for use from October to March between the hours of dusk to 21.00, which would allow the use of the sports pitch by the pupils at the school of for local sports clubs who have booked to use the facility.

The agent advises that the telescopic design has provided problems due to restrictions over how they can be used in conditions where the wind is over 18 mph, this operational difficulty would not occur with the lights as now proposed. The submitted report also states that the lights are similar to the approved application for 8 x 15m columns that provide 20 floodlights at Taunton School which is also relatively close to residential properties (16 – 20m).

The columns will be appear more 'slimline' than the retractable columns due to their nature, and will only be lowered for maintenance (there is a pivot point approx 6m from the ground).

The agent has been asked to reconsider the retractable columns to help reduce visual impact and to focus the lighting so that it does not 'spill' towards the west. To date the lighting consultant has not responded, but it is assumed that due to the costs involved and the difficulties of erecting/using the retractable columns in windy conditions, that this element of the proposal will not be changed. However the light spill issue can be overcome and this amendment is expected.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site is to the west of the existing sports centre which is located to the west of the listed part of the college. The pitch to which the application relates is set approx 3 to 4 m below the sports centre and the dwellings in Ferndale Drive, which are bungalows, whilst the properties on Claremont Lane are two storey detached dwellings. The pitch is situated approx. 30m from the nearest bungalow, the proposed lighting columns would be 27m from the nearest points of nos 4 and 5 Ferndale Drive, and the nearest column would be approx. 23m from no 6 Ferndale Drive. There are a series of artificial pitches and playing fields sited to the west of Queen's College. There are already floodlit facilities on the adjoining pitches/courts which are used beyond dusk in the winter months; these lights are either on 6m columns or on telescopic columns, which are 5m when retracted and 15m when extended.

Relevant History

52/06/0044 erection of telescopic lighting columns to floodlight Hockey Pitch, approved 06/03/07. (The site is to west of application site.)

52/88/0032 Construction of an all weather playing pitch with associated fencing and roadway, approved on 24/10/88, subject to conditions including planting to bank to rear of Ferndale Drive properties. (Application Site.)

52/88/0015 Construction of an all weather playing pitch with 8 x 16m floodlighting columns, refused (09/08/88), on grounds of detrimental intrusion into playing fields by reason of noise and visual encroachment into existing open setting resulting from the proposed lighting and columns and fencing, and the glare and high degree of illumination from the floodlighting. (Application Site.)

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

COMEYTROWE PARISH COUNCIL - supports if the columns are telescopic as those on the adjoining pitch. The PC feel that the permanent columns would not be in keeping with the surrounding area and especially the private properties close by and would be an unfortunate blot on the surrounding landscape and area as they would be clearly visible. the Council agree that the columns should not be used in the evenings after 9pm.

(As the application is for non-telescopic columns, the PC comments have been taken as an objection.)

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - no observations.

Representations

8 letters of OBJECTION raising the following issues:

- Concerned about the cumulative effects of floodlighting;
- Request an EIA to assess potential impact on bats;
- Object to permanent nature of floodlights;
- View from property will be dominated by floodlights;
- The nearest column will be 26m from the rear of properties and will be higher than the apex of the roofs;
- The rural and open nature of the area will be changed even further;
- A previous scheme was revised and retractable columns installed, the permanent columns will be closer and have greater detriment;
- Value of property affected if columns permanently raised;
- There are no trees to lessen the visual intrusion;
- Non-retractable lights are incongruous and conflict with the existing telescopic lights;
- Conflict with the surrounding hills including views of the Quantocks Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Noise from hockey matches that will occur with the lighting;
- The light will enter the bungalows' windows – irrespective of what the calculations say;

2 letters of COMMENT

- No objection subject to a 10.15pm switch off;
- retractable columns would be acceptable;

PLANNING POLICIES

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework,
CP8 - CP 8 ENVIRONMENT,
CP5 - TD CORE STRATEGY INCUSIVE COMMUNITIES,
DM1 - TD CORE STRATEGY - GENERAL REQUIREMENTS,
DM2 - TD CORE STRATEGY - DEV,
EN24 - TDBCLP - Urban Open Space,
C3 - TDBCLP - Protection of Recreational Open Space,

LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The history of the site and the adjacent site shows that there have been concerns in the past in respect to the installation of floodlighting, relating to the issue of floodlighting itself which residents consider a nuisance and the visual intrusion of the floodlighting columns in a generally open area.

Planning Policy

In policy terms, the NPPF, section 73, states - Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.....

Taunton Deane Core Strategy, Policy CP5, relates to inclusive communities, and the need to reduce inequalities and address accessibility to health.....and leisure and other community facilities ensuring a better quality of life for everyone both now and future generations. Policy DM1e relates to the criteria to be met for development, includingpotential lighting, glare and other former forms of pollution which could arise as a result of the development will not unacceptably harm public health....the amenity of individual dwellings or residential areas. The Taunton Deane Local Plan has retained policies which seek inter alia to retain open space, playing fields, sports grounds etc.

Benefits of the Development

The application does not relate to the creation of new facilities, but would allow for a greater use of the existing all weather facilities. The benefits for the pupils and pre-booked sessions for local sports clubs include the improvement of the recreational facilities allowing the newly resurfaces pitch to be used in the late afternoon and evening during the winter months, resulting in a longer time within which games can be played, and an increased opportunity for physical activity which is generally considered to be beneficial for health and wellbeing.

Residential Amenity

The proposed columns will be visible from the 8 residential properties immediately adjacent to the pitch, of those 8, 6 have objected. The objectors' properties are sited to the southwest on land which is higher than the pitches, which slightly lessens the viewed height of the columns, but will result in visual impact, as will the lit pitch in the evening times. The agent has been asked to reconsider the use of retractable columns, to help reduce visual impact, but at the time of writing there has been no response. Nonetheless, such visual impact to these residents should be weighed against the potential benefit in the sporting activity of the school pupils and other sports clubs' players. A previous landscaping scheme has resulted in some shrubs, but these would not provide any screening for floodlighting columns.

The submitted information indicates that the light will be focused upon the pitch, however there is a light spill to the west which impinges slightly on the gardens of the houses in Claremont Lane. This is due to be amended to avoid this situation.

Whilst the views from the properties will be interrupted by the columns, these are located some 27m away from the dwellings, and this is considered an acceptable distance not to be overpowering.

In respect of noise, there will be some noise from the playing of games as is usual from playing fields and pitches. The application site is closer to residential properties than the existing floodlit pitches and thus it is likely that there will be some increase in the noise levels. However the noise from pupils/teams playing sports is not considered to be unacceptable close to residential properties.

The condition on hours of use will help in respect to light and noise issues, and the switching off at 21.30 is considered to be appropriate for this location in the vicinity to residential properties.

Character of the Area

The general nature of the pitches and playing fields is unaltered, the character is slightly altered in that there will be additional illumination in the evenings, but I would consider that the character of the area as a whole will not be detrimentally affected.

Wildlife

No assessment has been provided over the potential impact on wildlife. The lights would be predominantly used over the winter months (the application confirms the usage would be October through to March), whilst the main bat activity is over the spring and summer. Given that there are existing lights on the adjacent pitch and the warm up area, it is considered that the impact on wildlife is unlikely to be significantly greater than the existing. It is not considered that there will be a significant cumulative effect as a result of these additional lights, and an EIA is not required.

Summary

In conclusion, it is considered that there will be some impact on the local residents, but such visual impact is outweighed by the greater use of the pitch by the school and sports clubs. The NPPF supports the promotion of healthy communities and this is one step in this area. There should however be more landscaping in the area of the slope, which could help screen the pitch when illuminated and the hours of illumination should be strictly controlled.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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