

**Application No:** W 13 / 0805

**Town/Parish Council:** Stoneleigh

**Case Officer:** David Edmonds

01926 456521 david.edmonds@warwickdc.gov.uk

**Registration Date:** 12/06/13

**Expiry Date:** 07/08/13

**Alvis Sports Ground, Green Lane, Finham, Coventry, CV3 6EG**

Erection of floodlights adjacent to football pitch FOR Alvis Sports & Social Club

-----

This application is being presented to Committee due to the number of objections received.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Planning Committee are recommended to grant planning permission subject to conditions.

**DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

The proposals comprise six 15 metre high floodlight columns each with three lamps sited on two sides of the length of the pitch, with a galvanised metal finish. The lamps would be housed in an aluminium casing and set asymmetrically with a projecting shield to allow light to be aimed accurately onto the pitch area. In order to reduce light levels in the area around the hedgerow to the east, the proposed siting of the lighting columns at the east end of the pitch has been moved away from goal line.

The floodlighting of the pitch is an essential criteria to enable the football club to progress in the league within which they play. The number of home league games in a season is 18/19 of which approximately 6 may be evening games. There are additional cup games where flood lighting is likely to be needed.

In recognition of concerns from the local community the club is proposing to limit the number of games played under lights to 9 per season which usually starts at the beginning of August and finishes in early May and is not proposing to use the lights for training. The league in which the club plays have also agreed to bring forward kick off times by a quarter of an hour enabling lights to be turned off at 9.45 p.m. for a league game.

The club has an existing car park for 50 cars with additional overspill provision.

**THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION**

The site is part of an existing complex of sports pitches in the Green Belt within the ownership of the applicant including a large cricket ground which doubles as junior football pitches, tennis courts, bowling green and a pavilion/social club.

The complex lies adjacent to the south west side of Green Lane which marks the administrative boundary between Warwick District and Coventry. To the north-east of Green Lane is a built up urban area with street lighting. The land to the south-west lies within the Green Belt and apart from tennis court floodlights has little artificial lighting.

The sports complex lies partly adjacent to the large rear gardens of 4 houses - no's 1 to 3 Leasowes Cottages. The vehicular and pedestrian access drive into the site lies at the north of the land in the applicant's ownership.

The site of the full size football pitch around which the six floodlight are proposed lies parallel to and at its nearest point is broadly 160 metres to the south west of Green Lane. The rear elevations of Leasowes Cottages lie broadly 145 metres from the pitch at their nearest points. The pitch has tight boundaries to the sides. There is a row of regularly spaced ash and oak trees along the south west boundary which borders arable fields. There is a copse along the eastern boundary which provides habitat for wildlife and beyond there is open countryside on the rising ground of Kings Hill.

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

- From 2002 there was a series of temporary planning permissions for portable buildings which function as extra changing rooms and shower facilities.
- In 2009, planning permission was granted for a single storey extension to the clubhouse which has not been implemented.

### **RELEVANT POLICIES**

- RAP13 - Directing New Outdoor Leisure and Recreation Development (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP7 - Traffic Generation (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP8 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP3 - Protecting Nature Conservation and Geology (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- National Planning Policy Framework

### **SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

**Stoneleigh and Ashow Joint Parish Council:** -No objections but they would like a restriction on the number of occasions the floodlights could be used and the timing of the periods of illumination so as to minimise the disruption to the neighbouring properties and the wildlife

**Coventry City Council:** No comment.

**Environmental Health:** Concerns are raised regarding the impact of noise in surrounding residential properties as a result of increased use facilitated by flood lighting. Floodlights should only be used for football matches. They suggest a condition that the floodlights shall be used for a maximum of 8 football matches each year and should not be lit later than 22:00 following these matches.

**Warwickshire County Ecology Unit:** They are satisfied that sufficient steps have been taken to reduce light spillage and its effects on surrounding wildlife. Advisory notes are needed in respect to badgers and great crested newts.

**Warwickshire County Highway Authority:** No objection.

**Sport England:** The application is not contrary to their playing fields policy. They have forwarded comments from the FA who are supportive of the proposed lighting.

### **Campaign for Dark Skies Warwickshire .**

- The night skies visible from Green Lane and Finham are good for an urban rural fringe
- The flood lighting, even downward directed, has a harmful effect on peace of mind and quality of life.
- Green Lane is one of the areas benefiting from the Coventry lighting scheme designed to create less sky glow. Warwickshire also enjoys longer periods when the night sky can be appreciated due to street light switch off programs
- The proposed development would result in the encroachment of light in the adjacent dark skies of the green belt
- It would reduce the prospect of stargazing in the area

### **Local residents.**

There are 11 objections all from the general local area which can be summarised as follows:

- Harm to the rural character of the green belt
- Harm to the semi rural character of Green Lane
- Harm to wildlife in the vicinity of the site, particularly protected species
- Increased intrusion from foul and aggressive language from players and spectators from facilitating increased evening play which can be heard from some adjoining houses with low background noise levels at night
- The street lights in Green Lane and most of Finham are well designed to minimise spillage thereby reducing glow from this part of the urban area
- Increased traffic generation to the area which needs to be assessed
- Inadequate parking provision on the land. Parking on the road is inconvenient
- Loss of rural outlook from adjacent residential areas
- Increased noise and disturbance late into the evening from comings and goings to the site
- The clubs needs for floodlighting would be transient and there is alternative floodlit leisure provision in the area.
- If granted there needs to be limits on the days and hours of operation.

- The application would result in the need to increase the hours of use of the changing rooms.

Three letters of support have been received, one of which is from the local area and 1 is from the opposite side of Coventry making the following comments:-

- Improvements to the sports ground may have some influence in retaining this open land from the future prospects of housing development at Kings Hill
- The sporting club should be commended for their efforts to engage with the community in pre application discussions and efforts to address the wildlife issue
- Green Lane is not a particularly quiet residential road during the day particularly coinciding with the school rush and parents evenings at the two Finham schools
- Better sporting facilities in Coventry are needed to compete with other cities

## **ASSESSMENT**

The main issues relevant to the consideration of this application are:

- Whether the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the impact on its openness
- The extent of any impact on the rural character of the area
- The extent of any impact upon the living conditions of local residents
- Highway safety and car parking
- Protected species

### **The Green Belt and Rural Character:**

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that appropriate facilities for outdoor sport which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it may be regarded as appropriate development within the Green Belt.

In this case, the proposed floodlight columns are proposed in order to extend the times over which an existing recreational facility can be used to meet the continuing aspirations of the club. The proposals have been designed to minimise light intrusion and limitations on the frequency and timing of their use have been agreed. As an alternative to the use of mobile floodlighting which would not require planning permission and therefore not be the subject of planning control, it is considered that the proposed floodlighting columns comprise appropriate facilities for outdoor sport within the context described.

Notwithstanding the height of the columns, they have been designed in a manner to limit their intrusiveness within the surrounding area. The row of three columns close to the outer (south west boundary) would be significantly softened by the existing row of semi mature trees on the boundary. Those along the north east boundary of the pitch in the middle of the sports complex would also be viewed within the context of existing buildings and structures including the single

storey brick club house and the fencing and floodlight pylons around the tennis courts.

Further, the visual envelope within which they would be viewed is limited by existing hedgerows fronting Green Lane and the dense belt of trees and shrubs along the eastern boundary.

Whilst the proposed columns will be visible within their surroundings, for the above reasons, they are not considered to impact on the openness of the Green Belt to the extent that they comprise inappropriate development or to impact upon the existing rural character of the surrounding area to the extent that an objection should be raised on those grounds.

#### Living conditions:

The floodlights are proposed to be positioned a significant distance from residential properties such that there is no impact from the physical structures themselves.

The lighting of the pitches during the hours of darkness proposed whilst visible from residential properties is mitigated by the effect of distance and existing trees and vegetation is such that there is not considered to be a material impact on the amenities of those properties in that respect.

The extended use of the pitch whilst resulting in activity and associated noise and disturbance in and around the club over occasional longer periods is also mitigated by the effect of distance such that it is not considered that there is a material planning objection in those respects.

#### Highway Safety and Car Parking

The proposals in themselves will not materially increase the nature or intensity of traffic movements to and from the site. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in that respect.

#### Ecological issues:

Following the introduction of revisions to the proposals reducing the extent of light spillage, the Warwickshire County Council Ecology Unit have raised no objections to the scheme and consider that the potential effects of the scheme on wildlife in the area have been sufficiently mitigated.

### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

The proposals are considered to comply with NPPF and Local Plan policies relating to the promotion of healthy communities and the provision of leisure and recreational facilities to meet the needs of the local community. They are considered to comprise appropriate development in the Green Belt which does not adversely impact upon the rural character of the area or the amenities of the occupants of nearby residential properties.

## **CONDITIONS**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission. **REASON:** To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown on the site location plan and approved drawing(s): flood lighting position plan REV 3, dated 10/05/13, Stainton flood light plans and elevations, CR4339/01, dated 07/04/06 and the 'Deltalux' luminaire BS 2000 INLINE and luminaire data (BS2000B) and the specification contained therein. **REASON :** For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1, DP2, DP3 and DAP3. of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 3 The floodlights hereby approved shall only be used for a maximum of 9 football matches in any single football season and for the avoidance of doubt shall not be used during training sessions. **REASON :** For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1, DP2, DP3 and DAP3. of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
4. When in use in accordance with condition 3 imposed upon this permission, the use of the floodlights the subject of this permission shall cease by no later than 22.00 hours. **REASON :** For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1, DP2, DP3 and DAP3. of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.



