

Agenda Item 7a

Case Number	24/02515/FUL
Application Type	Full Planning Application
Proposal	Erection of 12no. 8m LED lighting poles to sports pitches
Location	Sheffield United Football Club Derek Dooley Community Centre Weston View Sheffield S10 5BZ
Date Received	28/08/2024
Team	North
Applicant/Agent	SLA Planning Limited
Recommendation	Grant Conditionally

Time limit for Commencement of Development

1. The development shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.

Reason: In order to comply with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Approved/Refused Plan(s)

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the following plans, except as may be specified in the conditions attached to this permission, which shall in all cases take precedence.

Lighting Column, Drawing No.28670-1, published 29.08.24
Location Plan, Drawing Number P01, published 29.08.24
Proposed Site Layout, Drawing Number P03 Rev A, published 29.08.24
Sections, Drawing Number P04, published 29.08.24
Datasheet for lighting heads, published 29.08.24

Reason: In order to define the permission.

Pre Commencement Condition(s) – ('true conditions precedent' – see notes for definition)

Other Pre-Commencement, Pre-Occupancy and other Stage of Development Condition(s)

Other Compliance Conditions

3. The floodlights hereby permitted shall be installed in accordance with the Lumineux Lighting Design and Planning Statement published on 29.08.24 and include backspill guards. The intensity, direction and angle of the floodlights shall be maintained to achieve the lighting levels set out in within this document and the Local Planning Authority shall reserve the right to require modifications at any time.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality and occupiers of adjoining property.

4. The floodlights hereby permitted shall only be used between 15:30 and 21:15 hours Monday to Friday and between 15:30 and 19:15 hours on Saturdays and Sundays, with use of the pitches ceasing at 21:00 hours Monday to Friday and at 19:00 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. This shall be controlled in accordance with the management details set out in the agent's email received on 03.10.2024.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the locality.

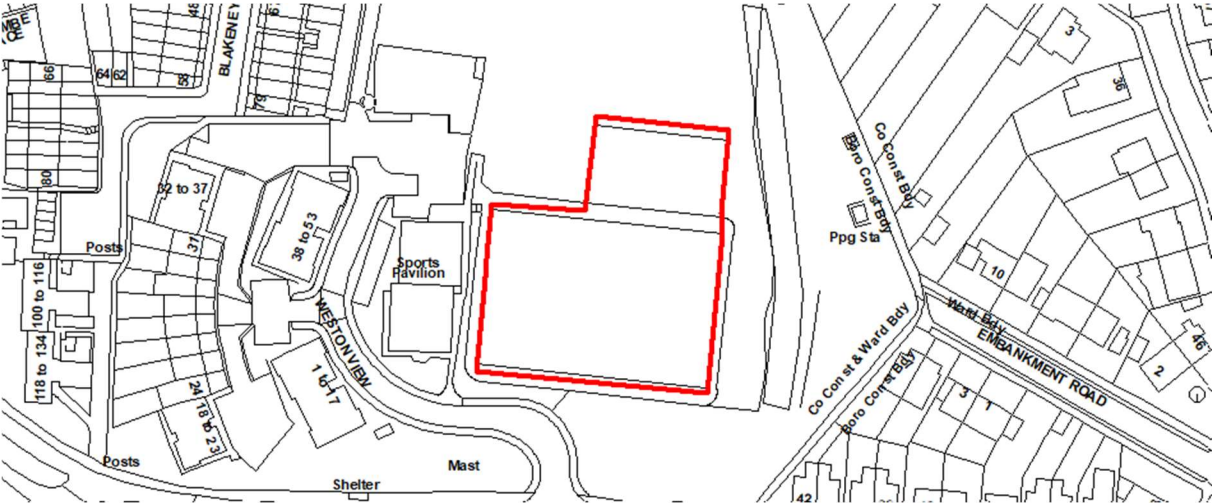
5. The proposed lighting columns shall be finished black and thereafter this colour shall be maintained.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.

Attention is Drawn to the Following Directives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has dealt with the planning application in a positive and proactive manner and sought solutions to problems where necessary in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Site Location



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Location and Proposal

The application site is an established sports venue, the Derek Dooley Community Centre, which is located off Weston Road, Crookes, and consists of a single storey building with artificial grass pitches to the east.

This application seeks consent to install 12 x 8 metre high LED lighting columns to illuminate the pitches, 8 of which would serve the larger pitch to the south and 4 would be located on the smaller northern pitch.

This site has been closed in recent years, following Covid. The intention is to bring it back into use and the supporting statement indicates that this is dependent on making the site useable during the evenings, across all months of the year. The application, as submitted, stated that the floodlights would operate until 22.00 hours.

However, during the course of the application, the agent has agreed to less extensive hours and would accept a condition limiting the illumination of the pitches until 21.15 hours Mon to Fri and until 19.15 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. Use of the pitches for playing would cease on the hour, with the final 15 minutes to allow the pitches to be cleared and nets stored away in a safe manner.

Planning History

06/04611/FUL An application for a community sports and leisure facility, including an extension to the existing fitness suite, formation of an outdoor football pitch, multi-use games facility, crown bowling green area, running track and provision of additional car parking accommodation (amended scheme - floodlights removed) was approved in April 2007.

Of particular note is that the proposal for 10m high floodlights was removed from the scheme. The Committee report stated that this would have had an unacceptable impact on the character of the area because of the intrusion of the flood light poles and the bright lights during the evening and at nighttime.

It was also commented that the inclusion of the floodlighting would have had an unacceptable impact on the amenities of residents due to the presence of light and noise disturbance by activities continuing well into the evening at all times of year.

14/01684/FUL An application for the installation of external floodlighting on column brackets to the existing uncovered pitches was withdrawn.

This application was for 10 x 10m high flood light columns which would have accommodated between 1 and 3 lights each. Though withdrawn, a published committee report was unsupportive of the scheme. The key conclusions were:

- The poles would be significantly higher than other features on the site and would dominate the skyline, having an urbanising effect which would be at odds with the character of the area.
- Whilst designed to a high specification in order to minimise light spillage and glare, there would be an increase in ambient light which would read as a brightly lit feature in a low light environment.
- Use of the site in the evenings would extend the noise implications arising from use of the pitches.
- Autumn and winter offered some respite from evening playing given the lack of lighting.
- It was considered that the hours of limitation would not overcome the issues raised.

Representations

18 letters of representation have been received, 15 in objection and 4 in support.

Objectors to the proposal raised the following material concerns:

- Light pollution / lighting too extensive
- Increase in general disturbance and noise
- Increased traffic
- Highway safety issues
- Wildlife impacts and no assessment of this
- Biodiversity enhancements should be included in the scheme
- After lights go off, people take extra time to leave
- Concerns over the scope and content of the lighting report
- Flood lighting was previously resisted in 2007
- Concern that the pitches won't be accessible to the local community if hire is expensive
- Increased air pollution
- No demand is demonstrated
- Insufficient advertisement of the scheme

Supporters of the scheme made the following comments:

- Welcome the site being brought back into use
- LED lighting is energy efficient
- Lighting will increase security
- Community benefits
- Environmental benefits

Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Council's development plan comprises the Core Strategy, which was adopted in 2009, and the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in 1998. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), most recently

revised in December 2023, is a material consideration.

Paragraph 225 of the NPPF provides that existing policies in a development plan should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the NPPF and that due weight should be given to existing policies in a development plan, according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

In all cases the assessment of a development proposal needs to be considered in light of paragraph 11 of the NPPF, which provides that when making decisions, a presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied and that where there are no relevant development plan policies, or where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date (e.g. because they are inconsistent with the NPPF), this means that planning permission should be granted unless:

- the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance (including SSSIs, Green Belt, certain heritage assets and areas at risk of flooding) provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

This is referred to as the “tilted balance” and this assessment will have due regard to this.

Assessment

Principle of Development

The site is within an Open Space Area as designated in the UDP. Policy CS45 of the Core Strategy promotes the improvement of Open Spaces, and Policy CS47 seeks to safeguard them. These policy aims broadly align with Chapter 8 of the NPPF (Promoting healthy and safe communities), which seeks to enable and support healthy lifestyles, for example through the provision of sports facilities, and significant weight can be afforded to the local policies.

The proposed lighting scheme would facilitate the site being brought back into use and would extend usage of the pitches into the evenings during the darker months. This would represent an improvement to the existing offering and align with the principle of these policies.

Impact on the Residential Amenities of the Locality

Core Strategy policy CS74 says that new development should contribute to a healthy and safe environment and to the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods.

Policy LR5 (k) seeks to ensure compatibility between adjacent land uses.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that the planning system should always seek to secure a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, whilst paragraph 191

seeks to 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. This particularly focuses on noise and light pollution.

The aims of these local and national policies are considered to align.

The closest residential property is 27.5 m to the south-east on Roslin Road. This, and other properties to the east and north-east, are separated from the site by intervening land and vegetation (trees and shrubs) which provide a visual buffer. The land levels also fall to the east.

Properties on Weston View, to the west, look over the site, but they are separated from it by the intervening highway and the single storey sports pavilion building. Some properties on Blakeney Road, to the west and north-west, back onto the area used for parking associated with the pitches and the wider site.

Lighting Impacts

Lighting would be introduced where there is currently none and this would be visible from nearby residential properties. The application is accompanied by lighting data and an interpretation of this within the Planning Statement, which states that the LED lighting now proposed is a contemporary improvement over the previously withdrawn proposals and allows for a more directional solution with substantially less light spill – it is claimed that the new design achieves more than an 80% reduction in lighting levels at the closest dwellings compared to previous proposals.

The maximum recorded lux (unit of illumination) at the rear of properties on Roslin Road would be 1.96 lux when both pitches are fully lit. As this is below 2 lux, it would be compliant with E1 standards which are typically required in dark environments such as National Parks (the site area would be categorised as an E3 area – a well inhabited town or urban settlement).

The submission has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Protection Service (EPS). EPS are satisfied with the report and its conclusions and consider that light is unlikely to spill into homes and gardens, and so would not result in unacceptable amenity implications. It is acknowledged that surrounding residents would have direct sight of the lit-up pitches, where they are currently used to this being a dark area, but it is considered that this change would not cause harm.

EPS have recommended restrictions to the hours of operation to 21.00 hours Monday to Friday and to 19.00 hours on Saturday and Sunday. A 15 minute addition to this has been included to allow for the site to be tidied up, as the agent has explained that the pitch use would be booked hour to hour. This is regarded as a reasonable request which would have no significant impacts.

Further information has been provided by the agent, to clarify that the lights will be managed via a smart switching system giving the operator control over each section of each pitch, rather than all the lights being switched on and off in unison. This

allows individual pitches, or sections of a pitch, to be lit when use is at a lower capacity. The ability to activate this will be controlled via a timer, with an override switch in the management suit. Timer controls would be used so that lights are only operational when ambient day light hours have fallen significantly (after 15:30 hours).

It is also expected that there will be a representatives on site during the hours of operation.

The combination of the high specification of the LED lighting, the restrictions on hours of operation and the management details as set out above – which would be controlled by condition – means that significant adverse amenity implications would not arise as a result of the proposed lighting scheme.

Noise and Activity Impacts

The applicant seeks to use the proposed lighting until 21:15 hours Monday to Friday and 19:15 hours on Saturdays and Sundays, with the use of the pitches ceasing 15 minutes earlier, on the hour. This would align with the hours of operation permitted in the approved Management Plan on application 06/04611/FUL (condition 13).

Illuminating the pitches would, however, allow these hours of use to be in play throughout the year, rather than confined to the lighter months. The consequence of this would be to prolong noise and activity associated with the use of the pitches and car parking area later into the evening at certain times of the year and for it to arise on a more regular basis.

However, as the pitches can already operate until 21:00 hours and 19:00 hours during the week and at the weekend respectively in lighter months, the activity associated with the site at this time is already well established and has been previously regarded as acceptable. In the darker months neighbouring residents are likely to be indoors more than using their gardens, which would reduce the impact of the use of the site.

It is some 10 years since the last scheme was submitted. An examination of similar schemes for flood lighting in the city has been undertaken and it is regarded that the proposals now submitted would be consistent with these and that it strikes an acceptable balance between allowing extended use of the facilities and protecting residential amenity.

Visual Impact

UDP policies BE5 and LR5 (c and i) and Core Strategy Policy CS74 seek to achieve good design and visual amenity impacts.

Chapter 12 of the NPPF seeks to achieving well-designed and beautiful places and paragraph 131 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

The local development plan policies described above are considered to align with the NPPF in relation to design.

The application site is open in character, with the wire mesh fencing allowing views through the site. This sense of openness, together with the low rise nature of the existing sports buildings, were designed to provide this sense of space. This is compounded by the fact that the housing area to the east, beyond the site is located at a significantly lower level.

12 x 8 m high floodlights are proposed. These are 2 metres lower than those proposed in the historic application, with an additional 2 in number. There would be some impact on the skyline, but the floodlights would not appear overly high within the wider context of the area where streetlamps on the adjacent road are in the order of 6 metres high and buildings are up to 4 storeys. Furthermore, the pitches are located at a lower level than adjacent highway, which would help to minimise the impact of the columns.

The area is formal open space, with built intervention in the form of fencing and artificial surfacing and, set in this context, the addition of slimline floodlighting columns would not appear out of place. The columns will be finished in black, which reflects the finish of the streetlamps.

The visual impacts would differ when the floodlighting is on, compared to the existing situation. However, this is an area of open space within an urban area with existing streetlighting running along Weston View. Furthermore, the use of the lighting would be limited in timing and would not be required all the year round. Overall, therefore, the floodlighting columns and the visual impact of floodlighting the site is not regarded as being incompatible with the area and the open character would be retained.

Highways

Core Strategy policy CS53 seeks to manage the demand for travel.

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that 'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.'

The local and national policies align and the local policy can be afforded significant weight.

The use of the site is long established, and the facilities are not proposed to be increased in capacity. The existing access and parking arrangements would be utilised and the scheme would not have a significant impact on highway safety.

Ecological Considerations

UDP Policy GE11 (Nature Conservation and Development) states that the natural environment should be protected and enhanced and that the design, siting and landscaping of development needs to respect and promote nature conservation and include measures to reduce any potentially harmful effects of development on natural features of value. Policy LR5 (a) also shares this aim.

Core Strategy Policy CS74 (Design Principles) identifies that high-quality development will be expected, which respects, take advantage of and enhances the distinctive features of the city, its districts and neighbourhoods, including important habitats.

NPPF paragraph 186 sets out principles to ensure that biodiversity and habitats are protected.

The aims of the local and national policies broadly align and the local policies can be afforded significant weight.

The introduction of lighting has the potential to disturb nocturnal wildlife, particularly as the site has linear scrub/woodland edge habitats favoured by bats and other nocturnal wildlife for foraging.

The hours of lighting have been reduced since the application was submitted, which minimises the impact of lighting on nocturnal wildlife. The lighting is also fitted with back spill guards that operate to minimise light spill and the downward direction of the lighting further aids this. There is some concern about the brightness of the lighting, however the practical need for this is recognised and reducing it would be detrimental to the purpose of the scheme. Considering the measures proposed to minimise the impact of the lighting, the ecological impact is regarded as acceptable.

The application site is restricted to the pitches, which are artificially surfaced, and there is no scope in this instance to incorporate biodiversity enhancements.

Response to Representations

Concern that the pitches won't be accessible to the local community if the hire is expensive - this falls beyond the remit of this application.

Air pollution - the scheme would not generate the amount of vehicle movements to trigger the application of air quality policies.

Insufficient advertisement of scheme - notification has taken place by neighbour letter and site notice in line with the Council's Code of Practice for Publicity and Consultation on Planning Applications.

Summary and Recommendation

Consent is sought to install 12 x 8 metre high LED lighting columns to illuminate the existing sports pitches at Derek Dooley Community Centre, on Weston View.

The most important policies relating to this application concern visual amenity, residential amenity, highway safety and ecology. The local policies are consistent with the NPPF and therefore significant weight can be afforded to these. The tilted balancing exercise does not come into play.

Historic applications have sought to resist floodlighting on this site, however in the intervening years floodlighting systems have advanced and can be designed to

minimise light spill. In this instance the lighting scheme is considered to be acceptable, together with the management proposals submitted.

There has also been historic resistance to facilitating extended evening use of the site, due to the proximity of housing. The reduced hours proposed (until 21:15 hours Mon to Fri and until 19:15 hours on Saturdays and Sundays) and floodlighting would allow consistent use of the site across the year, the lateness of this would not be extending beyond what can already take place in the lighter months.

The installations themselves would have an acceptable visual impact and suitable mitigation measures (reduced hours and back spill guards) are proposed to safeguard nocturnal wildlife.

The scheme is compliant with the above-mentioned policies and approval subject to the attached conditions is recommended.

Recommendation: Grant Conditionally.

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