

Parish: SUDBURY

Location: Football Ground and Clubhouse, Brundon Lane

Proposal: Installation of 2 no. 16.5 metre high floodlight towers (serving main pitch) and installation of 4 no. 16.0 metre high floodlight towers (serving youth pitch).

Applicant: AFC Sudbury

Case Officer: Ben Elvin

Date for Determination: 24 June 2009

THE SITE

1. AFC Sudbury are based at the Kingsmarsh Stadium, located off Brundon Lane. The football ground lies to the northern end of Brundon Lane, within a Special Landscape Area and in the Flood Zone 2 and 3.
2. The existing clubhouse building and associated buildings/structures are located along the western edge of the site. Permission was granted last year for a new clubhouse with changing facilities and new grassroots (youth) changing facility with associated community pavilion which have not yet been constructed.

THE PROPOSAL

3. The proposal consists of the erection of a total of 6 floodlighting columns. Two columns are proposed to serve the main pitch (at 16.5 metres high each) and 4 further columns are planned to serve the youth pitch (at 16 metre high each).
4. A Design and Access Statement has been submitted with the application which makes the following points;
 - The proposal is to erect; Youth Pitch - 4 no. 16.5 metre high floodlighting towers each with an average lux level of 75. 2 No luminaires per tower, Main Pitch – 2 no/ 16.0 metre high floodlighting towers each with an average lux level of 128. 3 No luminaires per tower.
 - Access to the towers will be via the Youth and Main pitches but the controls are centralised adjacent to the proposed clubhouse building.
 - The site is an established sports facility.
 - The two sets of lights will not be used at the same time.
 - The floodlighting to the youth pitch will have very limited use.
 - The floodlighting to the main pitch is an upgrade should the club be involved in any televised matches – a highly unlikely event. These will not be used during the periods when the existing lights are used generally.
5. A Lighting Assessment has also been submitted in support of the application.

RELEVANT HISTORY

6. B/08/00881 – Erection of clubhouse with associated changing facility and new grassroots changing facility with associated community pavilion (Approved).
7. B02/00648 – Erection of detached outbuilding (Approved).

8. B/99/0704 – Erection of covered spectators stand (existing standing enclosures to be demolished) (Approved).
9. B92/00602 – Erection of 4 x 18 metre high static floodlight columns supporting 5 lamps each (Approved).
10. B/91/01288 – Erection of 4 x 18 metre high floodlight columns (Approved).

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

11. **PPS1:** Delivering Sustainable Development
12. **PPG17:** Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

PLANNING POLICIES

13. The Development Plan comprises the East of England Plan, adopted 2008, saved policies in the Suffolk Structure Plan, adopted 2001, and the Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) adopted 2006. The following policies are relevant to this proposal:

East of England Plan - 2008

- **SS1** (Achieving Sustainable Development)
- **ENV7** (Quality in the Built Environment)

Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No.2) 2006

- **EN22** - Light Pollution – Outdoor Lighting
- **RE01** - Sports Facilities
- **RE03** - Existing Playing Fields
- **CR04** - Special Landscape Area

The relevant documents can be viewed via the internet. Please see Page 4 for details.

CONSULTATIONS

14. TC – Approve, but any existing conditions on times of use should be adhered to and enforced, and conditions should be imposed that the two sets of lights should not be used at the same time.
15. Adjoining Parish (Bulmer) – Cannot see any need for additional lighting and do not support the application. The height of the lights was also commented on, but this has been addressed in the revised information received.
16. LHA – any response received will be reported at the meeting.
17. ROW – No objections.
18. Braintree District Council (Adjoining District) – no objections.
19. SWT – request that any light spillage is kept to a minimum to avoid disruption to bats.
20. HoNABE (Environmental Health) – makes the following comments;

“Due to the angle of lighting, proposed hours of use and its setting away from residential development, this proposal is expected to have minimal impact on pollution of the night sky resulting in limited loss of amenity.

To further limit the potential for loss of residential amenity I would recommend that the intention to prevent both main and youth pitches being illuminated at the same time be formalised by a condition to that effect. I would also recommend that the proposed hours of use (8.30pm-9.30pm, 3 nights a week) be formalised by a condition.

I note that the application suggests that the two additional floodlighting towers on the main pitch are only intended to be used in the event of a match being televised, and that this is a very unlikely eventuality – I would therefore ask whether they will be used at any other time, otherwise they may not be used. If this is the case, you may wish to limit their use to televised matches only by way of a planning condition”.

REPRESENTATIONS

21. Sudbury Society make the following points;
- Note that the two towers to the main pitch will only be used during televised games, and that the 2 sets of floodlights will not be used simultaneously. They request that these matters are conditioned.
 - Concerned about light overspill.
 - The existing lighting is highly intrusive viewed from the town across the meadows.
 - Request assurances that the new lighting would be less intrusive and that formal approval will be conditional on a satisfactory site assessment under winter afternoon and night time conditions.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

22. Policy EN22 provides the criteria by which proposals of this form will be considered. It provides that applications for outdoor lighting will only be granted, inter alia, where the proposed lighting is the minimum necessary for security, leisure and safe operation of the site, light spillage and glare are minimised and where there is no adverse impact on highway safety, residential amenity or landscape issues.
23. Policies RE01 and RE03 encourage the support, provision and use of sports facilities and look to ensure that these facilities are not lost. These policies accord with the guidance provided in PPG17.
24. The four existing lighting columns on the site are 18 metres high and are directed largely towards the main pitch. It is apparent that some of the lights attached to these columns have been turned to be directed across the youth pitch. It is apparent from the response received from the Sudbury Society that these existing lights give rise to some light spillage outside of the site, affecting the adjacent water meadows. The proposed lighting scheme therefore needs to be considered carefully in respect of this impact.
25. The new lights will be provided in addition to these four columns. The four columns will be retained to light the main pitch in accordance with the requirements of the league in which AFC Sudbury participate, with the two additional columns to the main pitch being provided in respect of the potential need should the club qualify for a match which requires television coverage. The application makes it clear that this is currently an unlikely event, and that the new columns will not be used to supplement the existing columns except in televised circumstances.
26. The four columns to the youth pitch are required to improve the facilities that the club can currently offer to youth players, and are supplementary to the works approved for the clubhouse and changing facilities previously approved. This will enable the club to deliver advanced facilities at grassroots level and provide more inclusive facilities on the site.

27. The site does lie within the Special Landscape Area and there are concerns as to the impact on the surrounding area from this proposal (see paragraph 23 above). The columns will be visible from outside the site but they will be seen alongside the dominating 18 metre towers that are already in existence. Therefore, whilst there is an impact in this respect, it is not considered to be such that would cause harm to the character of the area. There is a strong tree belt along the eastern boundary of the site which provides an identifiable and established break from the water meadows, and which largely screens the field and structures from view from the meadows themselves. It is therefore apparent that the main issue of concern is in respect of the impact of light spillage towards the water meadows, and the potential impact on wildlife/habitat that may arise.
28. The lighting units (there are 2 lights on each of the 4 youth pitch columns and 3 on each of the main pitch columns) can be angled towards the areas required for illumination and, if necessary, shielded to ensure that the spill of light is minimised. These matters can be detailed by a condition attached to any permission granted. The Council's Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that the proposal will not result in a detrimental impact in terms of sky glow and recommends conditions in respect of the use and hours that will enable control to be retained over the development. The Lighting Assessment that has been submitted includes a Lux Diagram that shows that the spill of light from the lighting columns would not be such that would cause escape from the site boundaries. As such full vertical and horizontal "cut-off" will be achieved in line with the expected requirements for exterior lighting of this nature.
29. The site lies some distance from residential properties. To the east of the site lies the sewage treatment plant and an industrial unit. These are not considered to be at risk from light pollution, given that these are elements that are not likely to be in use at the times when the floodlights are proposed to be operated.
30. In summary, whilst the columns will result in visual intrusion to the character of the Special Landscape Area to some degree, and will see a proliferation of lighting on this site, they will result in a lighting solution that should help to reduce the impact of lighting being directed outwards from the site and will allow the club to develop their facilities in a comprehensive manner.
31. Given the provisions of policies EN22, RE01 and RE03 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006) the scheme should therefore be supported.

REASONS FOR APPROVAL

32. The proposal is considered to provide a suitable lighting solution to enable the continued use of the sports field in accordance with policies EN22, RE01 and RE03 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006). The proposed floodlighting will not, subject to accordance with conditions attached to the permission, cause detriment to residential amenity, highway safety or the character of the Special Landscape Area.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) Grant planning permission subject to conditions as follows;
 - Hours of operation
 - Angle of lights
 - Provision of shielding
 - The sets of lights only to be used independently of each other.