

Application No: 15/2704M

Location: KNUTSFORD LEISURE CENTRE, WESTFIELD DRIVE, KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE, WA16 0BL

Proposal: Removal and replacement of 8 no. external floodlights fittings to existing sports pitch mounted on existing column. Replacement / additional external lighting to car parking area. Works comprise of installation of new lighting columns with LED fittings (4 no.) and replacement of existing external light fittings to existing columns with LED type to Car Park Area (10 no.)

Applicant: Ian Hales, Cheshire East Council

Expiry Date: 10-Aug-2015

#### **SUMMARY**

The application site comprises of the sports pitch and car park associated with Knutsford Leisure Centre. The site lies within the Green Belt.

The proposal involves the replacement of light fittings to the existing floodlighting columns which are located around the perimeter of the sports pitch. It is also proposed to replace the light fittings on the existing columns in the car park. In addition 4 new light columns are proposed within the car park area.

The main issues relate to the impact of the development upon the Green Belt, the appearance of the area and residential amenity. No objections have been received from statutory consultees. The development enables the upgrade of existing lighting which is unlikely to have a materially greater impact upon the area than the existing installations.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**APPROVE subject to conditions.**

#### **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The application seeks full planning permission for installation of 8 replacement light fittings to be attached to the existing floodlighting columns surrounding the sports pitch at Knutsford Leisure Centre. It is also proposed to replace existing light fittings on the columns within the adjacent car park plus erect 4 new columns within the car park.

The existing lights are to be replaced with LED lighting which are understood to be a more modern fitting which have less associated light spillage. The proposed lighting will be controlled via timers.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The application site comprises the car park and associated sports pitch at Knutsford Leisure Centre. This is a shared site with Knutsford Academy. The site lies within the Green Belt. The surrounding area however, is predominantly residential.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

58691P: Forming synthetic turf playing pitch with fencing surround and floodlighting landscaping. Approved 1989

## **NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY**

### **National Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework

### **Development Plan**

The Development Plan for this area is the Borough of Macclesfield Local Plan.

The relevant Saved Policies are:

GC1: Green Belts

DC3: Amenity

The saved Local Plan policies (except those concerned with housing land supply) are consistent with the NPPF and should be given full weight.

### **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)**

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East, SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles, SE1 – Design

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Sports England:** No objections.

**Strategic Highways Manager:** No objections.

**Environmental Protection:** No objections.

**Knutsford Town Council:** no objections.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

1 letter of objection has been received. They comment that the development will increase light pollution unless the new lights give off more direct light to the sports pitch and the surrounding area. Heat produces mist in the winter. The current lights can be seen for miles and from the M6 J18-19 and M56 J10-9. The development is potentially dangerous distraction when aircraft use runway 2 at Manchester Airport.

1 letter of support has been received. They comment that the proposal represents an investment to enhance sports facilities in Knutsford. This will present an improved facility for the local Academy and local sports club Knutsford Hockey club. It also is a facility in general use/ hire by various community groups. At present the lighting is inadequate for competitive sports play so will increase the time available for club league matches and so presents an opportunity to hire to clubs not currently using the facility.

## **APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

The site lies within the Green Belt where development is strictly controlled to ensure that the openness of the area is preserved. The NPPF details that the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation can be an appropriate form of development provided that it preserves openness. This is echoed in Policy GC1 of the Local Plan which advises that essential facilities for sport and recreation can be considered acceptable within such areas.

Development proposals should be considered in terms of the three dimensions of sustainable development set out in the NPPF. These are economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

**an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy

**an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

**a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation and they are mutually dependent.

### Environmental role

#### *Openness of the Green Belt*

The development mainly uses existing lighting columns at the site, replacing the existing light fittings with LED replacements. Such development will not impact upon the openness of the area. The new lighting columns in the car park will be seen in the context of existing columns. It is considered that the development is acceptable having regards to national and local green belt policy.

#### *Impact upon the appearance of the area*

The site is in active recreational and education use with many of the columns in situ. It is unlikely that the additional lights will have a materially greater impact upon the surrounding area and they will be seen against a backdrop of existing recreation and educational infrastructure.

#### *Residential amenity*

There are a number of dwellings within the vicinity of the development, the nearest houses being at Fletcher Court, Westfield Drive and Bexton Road. The proposals have been considered by the Council's Environmental Protection Officer and no concerns have been raised in terms of light spillage and associated impacts. Any new columns are no closer to existing properties than existing lights at the site.

The supporting statement details that the lights will be fitted with a timer so that the car park lights will come on in the winter between 05.50-08.30 and 16.00 to 23.00. The sports pitch lights will be set to switch off at 22.15.

It is noted that planning permission 58691P limited the use of the pitch to between the hours of 09.00 and 22.00 hours Monday to Friday and 09.00 and 18.00 hours Saturday and Sunday.

It is considered that limiting the hours of operation of the lights should ensure that no unacceptable loss of amenity results.

While concerns have been raised over the impact of this development upon the Airport, the majority of the lights are already in situ. The lights have hoods over the fittings so light spillage upwards is likely to be limited.

#### Economic & Social role

The development will improve the current sporting facilities. The existing lights do not provide good coverage over the car park or sports field. The upgrade will support national and local objectives with regards to sports provision and creating healthy communities.

#### **Planning Balance**

The proposal primarily results in the upgrade of existing light fittings with LED lights. The new lights sit within the car park area and do not come any closer to existing dwellings than current lighting. The proposal is not considered to result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt or upon the wider area. Subject to conditions limiting the hours of operation of the lights, the development is unlikely to have a materially greater impact upon residential amenity than the existing lighting. The application is therefore considered to comply with Policies GC1 and DC3 of the Macclesfield Local Plan. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

**In order to give proper effect to the Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation),**

**in consultation with the Chair (or in his absence the Vice Chair) of Northern Planning Committee, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.**

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A02FP - Commencement of development
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. Lighting Plan
4. Lighting Times of operation
5. Contam Land

