

Application No: 17/0346M

Location: ALDERLEY EDGE CRICKET CLUB, MOSS LANE, ALDERLEY EDGE, SK9 7HN

Proposal: Installation of 9 x 8m high floodlight columns and lights, to serve 4 tennis courts.
Installation of 4 x 6.7m high floodlight columns and lights to serve 1 tennis court.
Lights to be installed on 2 existing columns to 1 adjacent court.

Applicant: Alderley Edge Cricket Club

Expiry Date: 21-Mar-2017

Summary

The NPPF (2012) strongly promotes sustainable development. The fundamental aim being to secure and promote social and economic growth, whilst preserving and enhancing both the built and natural environment.

This development would considerably enhance the existing sports facilities through external flood lights which would facilitate suitable outdoor play into the evenings. This could encourage more residents of Alderley Edge to play sport, provide after school coaching for younger members, and would generally modernise the existing grounds whilst promoting a healthy community

Officers are satisfied that the flood lights would not adversely affect residential amenity within this locality, nor would the lights significantly harm the character of this local environment. The lights are directed down towards the courts with light spillage not considered to be significantly adverse. A condition shall be attached regarding the attachment of cowls to further control light spillage.

All objections raised by members of the public, and the Parish Council, have been considered. However, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is a strong material planning consideration. The social benefits of this development would demonstrably outweigh the small environmental harm, ensuring the health, activeness and opportunities for recreation within the existing community, whilst reinforcing Alderley Edge as an attractive place to live.

Thusly it is recommended that this application be approved.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions.

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to Northern Planning Committee as it has been called-in by the Ward Councillor (Cllr Browne) for the following reason:

“Owing to the relationship between the proposed site and the adjacent Conservation Area, as well as residential properties on Orchard Green, this application would benefit from a site visit and discussion by members of Northern Planning Committee.”

PROPOSAL

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of permanent floodlights, to courts 1, 2, 4, and 5 and court 14, and to remain in operation until 9.30pm. The justification provided is as follows:

- Proposal has been designed in accordance with LTA guidelines
- Further requirements for playing time so to accommodate increasing demand
- Will enable play during winter months during non-daylight hours
- Further develop coaching programmes (through enhanced playing conditions) and more court availability
- Will help to deliver social and recreational benefits for the community.

The lights shall be LED, and fixed on steel columns 6.7m above ground level. 9 x flood lights would be installed between courts 1, 2, 5, and 4, and 5 x flood lights to court 14 (directed away from the side boundary).

This application has been submitted alongside 17/0345m (approved 18th May 2017), which sought to replace the existing grass courts with astro-turf courts

Full consultation has been carried out on the plans submitted with the application and the revised plans.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises Alderley Edge Cricket Club (AECC), a sports ground within a Predominantly Residential area of Alderley Edge. The site contains a sports pavilion, tennis courts and a cricket pitch across approximately 2.3 hectare . An area of parking is located to the north-east corner of the site, accessed off Moss Lane. The accompanying D&A statement states that the club has co-existed within the local community since 1870 and has been used as cricket and tennis club for almost 150 years, similarly evident through historic mapping.

The existing courts to the western side are 3 x astro turf, and 5 x grass courts. To the eastern side are a further 6 astro-turf tennis courts with the main cricket ground residing in between. The clubhouse provides changing facilities and a bar/food facility. Some courts are presently floodlit through temporary lighting and courts 9, 11, and 13 through permanent floodlights.

Bordering the site to the south is Mottram Road which sits at a slightly higher land level, and the Alderley Edge Conservation Area with this section allowing views over the grounds.

Some residential properties contain rear gardens which directly abut the AECC grounds, (including those from Moss Lane and Orchard Green).

CONSTRAINTS

Predominantly Residential
Existing Open Space
Adjacent to Alderley Edge Conservation Area
Alderley Edge Neighbourhood Plan

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

Various.

Of particular relevance:

17/0346m - Installation of 9 x 8m high floodlight columns and lights, to serve 4 tennis courts. Installation of 4 x 6.7m high floodlight columns and lights to serve 1 tennis court. Lights to be installed on 2 existing columns to 1 adjacent court. *Approved with conditions 18th May 2017.*

03/2068P – Floodlighting of tennis courts 9, 11 and 13 – 14 x 6.7m columns – *approved 06/10/03.*

01/1684P – Installation of 18 floodlighting columns on courts 11-14 – *refused 15/08/01.*

64210P – Three synthetic tennis courts – *approved 29/08/90.*

LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLICY

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (2004)

BE1 – Design and Guidance
DC1 – New Development
DC3 – Amenity
DC6 – Circulation and Access
DC8 – Landscaping
DC35 – Materials and Finishes
DC37 – Landscaping
DC64 – Floodlighting
RT1 – Protection of Open Space

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

Policy PG1 (Overall Development Strategy)
Policy SD1 (Sustainable Development in Cheshire East)
Policy SD2 (Sustainable Development Principles)
Policy SC2 (Indoor and Outdoor Sport Facilities)
Policy SE1 (Design)
Appendix C (Parking Standards)

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Of particular relevance are paragraphs:

7 (Achieving Sustainable Development)

8 (Promotion Healthy Communities)

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (as updated online)

CONSULTATIONS

Alderley Edge Parish Council (16th February 2017):

By a vote of 3:2 the Parish Council recommends refusal on the grounds that the development will have a significant and detrimental impact to adjoining houses with regard to light and noise.

Alderley Edge Parish Council (16th May 2017) – Revised Plans:

The Parish Council recommends refusal on the grounds that it would have a significant and detrimental impact to adjoining houses with respect to light and noise and also request that it is called in to the North Planning Committee.

Noted.

Environmental Health:

Lighting

This service can only make comment where it considers that light nuisance may be caused i.e. lights shining directly into a property. The applicant has submitted information which details that the lighting of the courts may not be intrusive to residents of neighbouring dwellings, particularly as the proposed floodlit courts are separated from residential properties by another court (apart from court 14 where it is understood that temporary lighting is already in place). Consequently, this Service is unable to make an objection. However, there is likely to be some 'amenity' issue in respect of residential neighbours 'looking out' on to a lighted area where there was no lit area beforehand. This 'residential amenity' issue is a matter for the consideration of the planning department.

Noise

Additional noise may be caused from players voices and from the impact of tennis balls on racquets etc. The application states that the proposed use of the lighted tennis courts would be 3.30pm to 10pm on a daily basis. In order to minimise the degree of disturbance to neighbouring residents from noise, this Service would recommend that a maximum 9pm termination time on any night is imposed as a condition of an approval.

Highways Officer:

The development is unlikely to increase peak demand. It may increase visitor numbers during darker hours or when the weather isn't as good. If anything, it is likely that this development would spread demand. A transport statement is not required.

Conservation Officer:

No objection. This development would not detract from the significance or setting of the Conservation Area.

REPRESENTATIONS

Original Plans

5 x letter of support have been received summarised as follows:

- Only three flood courts resulting in very little opportunity for play in evenings during winter
- Demand for play during winter and coaching and general play by members is constrained as a result of insufficient lighting
- Scheme is beneficial to the future of the club
- Additional lighting will not unduly harm residential amenity
- Proposed lighting complies with Institute of Lighting Professionals requirement for light intrusion limits. Meets the recommended pre-curfew light levels for both a 'Suburban' environment (E3) and a 'Rural' environment (E2).
- Guards will be installed on the lights ensuring that the spillage is at least 50% lower than that shown on the diagrams
- Apart from court 14 (which already has temporary lights), the play will be at least a courts width away from the club boundary.
- Proposals are required by members of both AECC and the local community.
- Proposal complies with planning policy.
- Club has approximately 650 members (450 adult, 200 junior) and 200 non-members who are coached at the club. Club is currently unable to meet demand
- Proposal would enhance the facilities the club can offer.
- No harm to residential amenity
- Safer conditions
- The development is socially sustainable.
- Noise increase will not be significant
- Club is an important component of the local community
- Modernisation of the tennis club
- Benefits to youth members and local schools
- Lighting shall be very focused
- Curtains will be closed when flood lights are in use

15 x letters of objection (including two from the same property) have been received, summarised as follows:

- New proposal increases the number of floodlights, and size of floodlights in comparison to a previous approval.

- Poor design of lights
- Harm to the character of the area
- Inappropriate relationship with housing.
- Lights proposed to be on till 10pm instead of the current 9.30pm
- Mobile lights installed on-site, which currently illuminate garden
- Proposal detrimental to character of the Conservation Area
- Plans would suit the perceived business needs of AECC to the detriment of Alderley Edge.
- Play during winter would benefit only a few to the detriment of the surrounding residents
- Light pollution
- Will poles be retracted when not in use?
- Light glare into houses
- Impact on parking
- Traffic survey should be requested
- Condition should be attached regarding max. operation times (9pm – winter, 10pm - summer)
- Proposal will encourage the switch from a modest club to a large sporting facility
- Loss of privacy
- Harm of the view over the cricket pitch
- Request assurance of the behaviour of tennis players i.e. quietness at later hours
- Noise pollution
- Cows not indicated on the flood lights
- No retraction of lights will harm visual amenity of the site
- Proposal would conflict with previous decision notice
- Development must meet guidance notes set by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.
- Extending the parking period outside of summer months (when members are more likely to drive) could exacerbate parking issues.
- Similar applications have failed.

PETITION (Original Plans)

44 x signatures of **support**

46 x signatures of **objection**.

Revised Plans

0 x letters of support

12 x letters of objection (including 2 from one property).

Issues raised largely echo the objections for the original plans although some additional objections raised include:

- Minimal change between original and revised plans
- Lack of communication between neighbours and AECC
- Negative impact on Open Space designation
- Clutter of cricket ground through infrastructure (nets, fences etc).

All comments are noted. See appraisal.

Two site inspections have been carried out. Public consultation has been carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

APPRAISAL

Key Issues

- Principle of development;
- Design considerations
- Character of the area
- Alternative Scenario / Fall-back position
- Highway Implications
- Sustainability

Principle of Development

The application site is set within the settlement boundary as defined by the Local Plan (2004). Within these limits, development is normally acceptable in principle subject to all other material considerations being satisfactory.

The Councils strategic approach to recreation is:

“To improve recreational provision for the benefit of all residents and visitors whilst ensuring that conservation and restraint policies are not undermined.”

Similarly, the NPPF emphasises the important contribution that open spaces, and opportunities for sport and recreation, can make to the health and well-being of communities. At paragraph 70, the NPPF is clear in its guidance that planning decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space and community facilities (such as sports venues) as these can enhance the sustainability of communities. Further to this Policy RT1 of the MBLP (which is consistent with the NPPF) emphasises the protection which must be afforded to these spaces.

AECC provides approximately 2.3ha of combined private playing fields (some 64% of the total within Alderley Edge) and provides significant outdoor recreational space for the local community through opportunities to play both tennis and cricket.

The social benefits of the development would include the Council supporting a sports club which provides recreational and health benefits to residents of Alderley Edge and the wider Cheshire East population. The club also works with local schools supporting both playing and coaching opportunities for children and younger adults encouraging them to engage in sport from an earlier age. The scheme would inevitably benefit the business needs of AECC, but the success of this enterprise is directly beneficial to the community needs of Alderley Edge. By investing in floodlights the development would adapt to modern requirements, with further opportunities afforded to local residents and further strengthening Alderley Edge as an attractive settlement to both reside, and to visit.

Further to the above, future housing provision within Alderley Edge and Wilmslow will increase demand of such facilities and by providing opportunities to play throughout both the

day, and year, the increased demand can be spread without intensifying the use of the site and associated car park/road network.

This development fully accords with both policy RT1 of the MBLP (2004) and paragraph 70 of the NPPF (2012). The principle of supporting the 'Existing Open Space' designation and success of AECC, which as above, contributes significantly to the social aspect of sustainable development, is a significant weight in favour of this development.

In determining this application strong weight is afforded to Policy DC64 (Floodlighting), which states (inter alia) that: proposals should

- Have no significant adverse impact on the landscape character
- No significant adverse impact on the amenity of residents
- Not compromise the safety of transport
- Should not represent an unacceptably adverse intensification of use of the application site.

The various details of this policy are assessed in the following sections.

Design assessment and effect on the character of the area

In respect of the public realm, the proposed floodlights would be most visible from Mottram Road, which itself resides within the Alderley Edge Conservation Area (CA). The proposal would therefore have an impact on the setting of this designation.

During daytime hours, the lighting columns would be visible, although these features would be set on land below the level of Mottram Road and some soft screening, albeit non-continuous, adjacent to Mottram Road would help to screen these features. They would also be set to the sides of the grounds and thus not prominent within the main setting. Perspectives of these features would be viewed against the backdrop of other built forms (mostly houses) and would not harmfully detract from the setting of the CA. The lighting to court 14 would be set approximately 14m from Mottram Road, and the floodlights to courts 4 and 5, approximately 38.0m. The land level differences, coupled with the modest height, screening and distance, would result in an acceptable impact on the surrounding area. Other perspectives of the floodlights would not be available due to the residential developments surrounding the other three sides.

During evening hours, notably during winter months, the lighting would certainly have the greater impact. Whilst the floodlights would be directed downwards towards the courts, this would still create an illuminous field which would be prominent from Mottram Road. The agent has, however, provided detailed spillage diagrams viewable within the supporting plans, which highlight the focused nature of the lighting, and its mostly negligible illumination of areas outside the target area.

The Environmental Zone for Alderley Edge (ILP Guidance Notes) is E2, which is classified as 'Rural' and generally represents a low district brightness environment. The plans submitted indicate compliance with the ILP criteria for assessing light pollution and in respect of light spillage the development would comply with E2 regulations. The main impact is therefore not so much the lighting of the surrounding external environment, but the prominence of the lit courts.

Whilst the lit courts would be a prominent feature, it is not considered that this would be to the significant adversity of the areas character. Alderley Edge Cricket Club has been established in this location for at least 140 years and can be considered a valuable attribute to the local community. This is not a new type of development for the area which remains to be seen as to the degree of assimilation. The sports grounds are both a permanent, and significant, feature within Alderley Edge. The illumination of the courts in the evening would encourage viewing of the grounds from Mottram Road, and would portray members of the community engaging in sport. Whilst fairly prominent, this view would not be harmful to the character of the Conservation Area and would simply represent an active and healthy part of the population. A benefit could arguably be put forward that the visibility of the grounds could encourage further members of the community to partake in sport. It is expected that when the courts are not in use, the lights would be switched off, both to preserve the character of the area, and in terms of energy conservation. Moreover, it is generally expected that most play would occur during daytime hours.

Further contributions of artificial light within the area include street lighting along Mottram Road, internal lighting through windows of dwellings, and headlights of vehicles along one of the main routes into Alderley Edge. The grounds are also in close proximity to the town centre where again artificial lighting is generally expected. The concerns raised by neighbours have been noted, and it is accepted that the development would have a greater impact on the setting of the CA than at present. However, this impact is not considered significantly harmful in that conflict with policies BE1 or BE3 (Conservation Areas) would be raised.

It can be further noted that the Conservation Officer has been consulted on the development and has not raised any objection.

Alternative scenario / fall-back position.

The alternative scenario must also be considered, in which should development be refused, the applicant could simply continue, or expand, the use of mobile flood lights. Such provisions would fall outside the development criteria and would not be subject to strict planning control. The light spillage of these lights would likely be far greater than those proposed, would not be controllable through planning conditions, and could ultimately have a greater impact on both the setting of the conservation area, and residential amenity. This would also compromise the playing quality of Alderley Edge Cricket Club.

Should this application be approved, a condition would be added to ensure that temporary flood lights are removed and do not provide additional illumination to courts 1, 2, 4, 5, or 14.

Conditions will be added regarding the finish of the lighting columns, and a post implementation assessment of the level of lighting to ensure compliance with the approved plans.

Residential amenity

Concerns have been raised about the level of lighting and associated noise from play up to 10pm, which is 30 minutes later than the existing hours of operation. Following discussions

with the applicant, the opening hours have been reduced to 9.30 (in accordance with the existing agreement)). A condition is recommended for attachment to any positive decision ensuring that the lights are switched off no later than 9.30pm.

The applicant has submitted detailed plans clearly highlighting the light spillage at a number of heights (ground level, 2m and 4m). In all scenarios, it shows the light spillage terminating quite abruptly before the respective site boundaries. The lit courts would also be one court width away from gardens of Orchard Green, approximately 18.0m.

Concerns were initially raised about the direction of lighting adjacent to Arden House (Mottram Road) with only the trees/hedges preventing significant lighting of their rear garden. The applicant has agreed to re-orientate the floodlights to direct light away from the boundary with the proposed relationship now acceptable.

Further to this, it is widely expected that during evening/darker hours, curtains/blinds would be drawn and the garden would not be occupied as an external amenity space. In most scenarios, therefore, the illuminated courts would not be unduly prominent from any habitable rooms.

Tennis is not a particularly noise generative sport, although the LPA would expect AECC to advise members playing later in the evening to be respectful of neighbouring residents.

Again, some weight is afforded to the existing scenario in that players could use the approved all-weather courts with mobile flood lights which would have a greater impact on terms of light spillage.

The consultation from Environmental Health has been noted. However, it is generally expected that residents would not be overlooking the tennis courts during evening hours and the light glare would not compromise the internal amenity of the dwellings regardless of whether curtains or blinds were drawn. Should curtains be drawn, however, the impact on sleeping patterns would be negligible. Notwithstanding the above, external lighting would be shut off at 9.30pm (ensured strictly via condition) which is considerably before the recommended 11.00pm curfew time outlined in the ILP 'Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light' and would be <5 lux in accordance with this document.

Whilst a very slight impact exists regarding the visibility of these courts from any rear 1st floor windows, they would not be overbearing, nor unduly dominant. This impact would not significantly detract from the amenity of the occupiers. The proposal accords with policy DC3 of the MBLP (2004).

Highway safety and Parking

The development is not likely to significantly increase peak demand. The existing on-site parking provision is considered sufficient during daytime within the summer months, which is arguably when demand is highest. By encouraging play later in the evening, this would help to spread the demand and could arguably reduce pressure on the existing car park at peak times.

Play during winter is likely to be less than during summer, and again it is considered that the car park could cope with the increased numbers during times outside of summer. The Highways Officer has been consulted and has raised no objection to the development.

Sustainability

Environmental sustainability

Slight impacts are acknowledged to both the character of the area, and some slight impact to the residential amenity of dwellings along Orchard Green. These impacts are however not considered to be significantly harmful. The applicant has undergone detailed research and consultation with lighting technicians to reduce light spillage as much as possible. The development would accord with the Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light (ILP) and the light spillage beyond the courts would not be excessive. Cowls to be attached to these lights (details of which shall be conditioned) shall further help to reduce light spillage. The objections received have been considered and assessed on-site, but the proposal is recognised as environmentally sustainable.

Social sustainability

The proposal would notably provide social benefits for both Alderley Edge, and the wider Cheshire East population. By strengthening and modernising the existing sports grounds, AECC would remain a key feature within Alderley Edge. The encouragement of evening play would benefit existing members, promote membership to non-members (who would otherwise be unable to play in winter due to work commitments), and help children and younger members through after-school coaching programs. Both at a national and local policy level, the activeness and health of a community is promoted (RT1 of the MBLP, and section 8 of the NPPF). This development would be in direct accordance with the direction of these policies.

Economic sustainability

There would be some benefits to the business aspect of Alderley Edge Cricket Club through potential income from additional memberships / and uptakes of coaching programs. These benefits to AECC, however, are directly linked to the social benefits for the residents of the community.

Other small economic benefits include those to local business within Alderley Edge/Wilmslow which may receive additional commerce via the purchase of sports equipment / attire.

Summary and Planning Balance

The objections have been noted and considered, however the presumption in favour of sustainable development is a significant material consideration in the determination of this application. Taking into account the merits of the application, and compliance with both local and national planning policy, the proposal satisfies the criteria for sustainable development. In respect of the tests of Paragraph 14, the benefits of the scheme significantly and demonstrably outweigh the increased impacts on the built environment, which are not considered significantly adverse. The social benefits of this development would demonstrably outweigh the small environmental impact, ensuring the health, activeness and opportunities

for recreation within the existing community, whilst reinforcing Alderley Edge as an attractive place to live. Following assessment of the plans, this development would comply with policies DC64 and RT1 of the MBLP.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF requires development proposals that accord with the development plan to be permitted without delay. Thusly this application goes before the Planning Committee with a recommendation of approval subject to appropriately worded conditions being attached to any grant of permission.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to debate, vary or add conditions / informatives / planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Planning and Enforcement Manager has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Northern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions:

- Plans
- Three year timescale
- Materials
- Finish of columns (prior to commencement)
- Cowls (prior to commencement)
- Post implementation assessment of light spillage
- Lighting shut off implementation system (prior to commencement)
- Courts in use no later than 9.30pm.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. Assessment of light
2. Plans
3. Standard 3 years
4. Materials in accordance with application
5. Prior to commencement, details of the finish of the columns to be submitted.
6. Details of Cowls (prior to commencement)
7. Lighting shut off implementation systeme (prior to commencement)
8. No use later than 21.30
9. NPPF Informative

