

This report needs to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

DATE INSPECTED:

TELEPHONE CALLS: YES / NO

DATE:

Ribble Valley Borough Council

DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT - REFUSAL

Ref: CB

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| Application No: | 3/2015/0931/P |
| Development Proposed: | Installation of 8.no. x 15m high galvanised steel flood lighting columns to be installed around BRFC Academey Show Pitch. |
| Site Address: | Blackburn Rovers Football Club Academy, Old Langho, Blackburn, BB6 9BA |

CONSULTATIONS: Parish/Town Council

Parish Council - No objections to this proposal. No comments or observations received.

CONSULTATIONS: Highway/Water Authority/Other Bodies

CONSULTATIONS: Additional Representations

RVBC Environmental Health – Raises objections to the proposal.

RVBC Countryside Officer – The light spillage from the proposals are likely to adversely affect the ecology using the woodland adjacent to the site. The impact on ecology is a material consideration therefore insufficient information has been submitted.

Neighbour representations – One petition has been received containing 12 signatures from people residing on Highwoods Park, Dickens Court, and Elm Tree Avenue which object to the proposal on grounds that “the installing of lighting to this level and brightness will spoil the village in terms of eyesore both to the areas and houses that are positioned close to the pitch or have visibility and most importantly we believe this will provide disturbance for wildlife in the surrounding fields that abut the area.”

Three separate representations have also been received, raising the following concerns:

Light pollution affecting the locality, Hurst Green and the AONB.

Light pollution will impact on the amenities of surrounding neighbours.

- Traffic – significant increase likely – inconsistencies in the application – lighting for ‘show pitch’ but refers to training sessions, therefore intensity of use will increase.
- Access to the academy goes past a number of sensitive locations including a children’s plan area, concerns that the introduction of flood lights will result in the extension of playing hours much later in the night and the use of the approach roads later at night and more intensively would result in increased traffic danger.
- Concerns about the effect on ecology on the Brockhall and Academy site and adjacent to the site at The Old Zoo by light pollution and increased traffic.
- Litter – Litter is an issue at Brockhall from users of the existing Training Ground and Academy; training later in the evening will result in fast food and energy drinks being littered.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

Key Statement EN2 - Landscape.

Key Statement EN4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Policy DMG1 – General Considerations.

Policy DME3 – Biodiversity Considerations.

POLICY REASONS FOR REFUSAL:

EN2 and DMG1 - Light pollution – impact on landscape and AONB

DMG1 – Light pollution – adversely affecting amenities of local residents.

EN4 and DME3 – Insufficient information to assess effect on local ecology on and adjacent to the site.

COMMENTS/ENVIRONMENTAL/AONB/HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES/RECOMMENDATION:

The application seeks permission to erect eight floodlights around a show pitch on the Blackburn Rovers Academy site at Brockhall Village.

The academy site is located in a valley which is overlooked by large areas from within the AONB, including Hurst Green and the Stoneyhurst College complex. Access to the Academy site is located at the bottom of the road known as Franklin Hill. Woodland exists to the west of the pitch proposed to be illuminated with another woodland existing to the south east of the wider site. Residential properties exist to the south, east and west of the site. A PROW exists along the southern boundaries of the site.

Permission is sought for 8 no. floodlights to surround a football pitch located against the western boundary of the grounds. The application form states the floodlights would be 15m high, whereas supporting documentation within the application states they would be 16m in height. Blackburn Rovers was asked by the LPA to provide detailed elevations of the proposed floodlights in situ which would have clarified both the height of the flood lights and their type. However, this information has not been forthcoming. The details of the exact lighting design at the top of each supporting pole have also not been submitted. The application shows supplier details of individual lights, however, the LPA have been advised that the lights will be the same as at the main training ground. Each of the lights around the all-weather pitch at the Training Ground has 6 lights at the top of each supporting pole.

It is not clear what is being applied for, therefore it is unclear what the light spillage plans have been based upon.

Assessment

The proposal is to illuminate an exhibition pitch with floodlights at the opposite end to the site to the existing floodlights, which is currently an unlit area. As became evident during the site visit the location is directly overlooked by both nearby housing and also in sightline of properties in Hurst Green/Stoneyhurst. Also visible from the site is parts of Stoneyhurst College and its Chapel. Parts of this heritage asset are designated Grade I listed status. Both Hurst Green and Stoneyhurst are located in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

When in use, the light overspill and reflection from the floodlights will be highly visible in the locality and the wider landscape and would detract from visual amenity and landscape character. The proposal therefore fails to accord with Key Statement EN2 and Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy.

The LPA and Environmental Health departments have had previous experience with the floodlighting of the Blackburn Rovers All Weather pitch at the main training ground, also on the Brockhall development. This floodlighting has highlighted the considerable impact on neighbouring properties both from light 'overspill & reflection' and noise resulting from increased use in the evenings despite the information submitted with the application at the time suggesting otherwise. Bearing this in mind, and given both the lack of detail and conflicting detail in respect of the floodlights within the application, the Council's Head of Environmental Health considers the 8 x 15 or 16 metre high lighting columns would be

dominant and have a great impact at distance resulting from significant reflection and overspill of light from the lighting and pitch surface. It is considered that this development will have significant impact upon the local environment and amenity of residents and is therefore unsuitable.

The LPA shares this view. The nearest residents exist adjacent to the southern boundary of the site, behind the Academy building which is set at a lower level to these dwellings which are positioned at an elevated position overlooking this valley bottom.

The application description suggests that the floodlights will be for a 'show pitch' which suggests occasional use, but other information suggests they will be able to undertake more training at the site. The Agent was asked to provide information to clarify the proposed use; times and periods of use. Again, this has not been provided; however, the LPA has been advised that this will enable more training to take place in the evenings.

It is thus likely that the use of the site in the evenings will intensify, and dependant on the number of additional people, and the times and frequency of use, this may lead to noise levels that would significantly affect the residential amenities of these affected properties to the detriment of amenity. This combined with the introduction of flood lights would significantly detract from the amenities currently experienced by local residents. Accordingly the proposal conflicts with Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy, specifically the section within DMG1 that focuses on Amenity and will also be refused on this basis.

Woodland exists abutting the western boundary of the 'show pitch'. The effect on protected species is a material planning consideration and the Council's Countryside Officer consider the wildlife using this woodland are likely to suffer from the proposed floodlights. The Agent was asked to provide an Ecological Survey so this could be assessed. This has similarly not been provided. Insufficient information therefore exists to allow the LPA to carry out its statutory duties. This will form an addition reason for refusal.

To conclude, the proposals would have a significant impact on the local and wider landscape including the AONB contrary to Key Statement EN2 and Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy. The proposed flood lights would illuminate a dark countryside site which residents overlook and insufficient information has been submitted to satisfy the LPA that amenity of local residents would not be harmed by the introduction of these floodlights. Finally, insufficient information has been submitted to enable the LPA to assess the impact of the proposals on local wildlife both nationally and European protected. For these reasons, the application will be resisted on this basis.

RECOMMENDATION: That permission be refused.