

**Item 4b**                    **12/00511/FUL**

**Case Officer**            **Caron Taylor**

**Ward**                      **Chisnall**

**Proposal**                **Erection of 4 no. 15m high floodlight columns on main football pitch**

**Location**                **Charnock Richard Football Club Charter Lane Charnock Richard ChorleyPR7 5LZ**

**Applicant**               **Mr Shaun Tootell**

**Consultation expiry:** **12 June 2012**

**Application expiry:** **16 July 2012**

### **Proposal**

1. The application is for the erection of 4 no. 15m high floodlight columns on the main football pitch at Charnock Richard Football Club.

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that this application is granted planning approval.

### **Main Issues**

3. The main issues for consideration in respect of this planning application are:
  - Principle of the development
  - Background information
  - Impact on the neighbours
  - Design
  - Ecology
  - Traffic and Transport
  - Public Right of Way

### **Representations**

4. 13 letters of objection have been received on the following grounds:
  - These floodlights will be an eyesore to our beautiful village;
  - They will ruin the gorgeous landscape that comprises Charnock Richard;
  - They don't understand the need for the local village to be in a higher league than other nearby villages, which is the primary reason for these lights to be installed. Our peaceful village will be ruined by noise and traffic congestion and there will be more light pollution;
  - These lights will create light pollution which they will be able to see from their home;
  - They are annoyed that a planning application has been made. It will not contribute to the village at all;
  - They are not in keeping with the village ethos. They would be an eyesore on the landscape when not lit and when lit would become an illuminated eyesore;
  - The reason for the application is to enable a team (not made up of Charnock Richard residents) to play football at higher level. This would bring with it all the problems

incumbent i.e. More traffic through Charter Lane, parking problems which I am sure would restrict ambulances trying to reach the field in the event of an emergency;

- Will encourage clubs from all over the Chorley area to want to use these facilities. The end results will be that Charter Lane will become for the residents of the village a nightmare to drive down or to avoid at all times when any match is being played at night. It's bad enough now at the weekends or when evening matches are being played;
- The club has already had a number of extensions and is a danger of overtaking the whole village, they do not think it necessary to enhance the facilities more;
- They do not think a small village with no real amenities needs a floodlight pitch;
- The proposal will look totally out of character and will ruin the landscape;
- The tall lights will be an eyesore and look out of place in a small village and visible throughout the area;
- Traffic will be worse if the club play in a higher league;
- There is not enough parking for the number of cars meaning people leaving their cars outside resident's properties. Parking is bad enough at weekends but it will be most evenings as well;
- Charnock Richard is a small village that is getting too ambitious;
- The lights will result in noise in the evenings when children are in bed and have to get up for school the next day and bright lights may shine into the bedroom windows affecting their sleep;
- Floodlights should be in town and cities not a very small village;
- Most of the people who support it do not live in the village;
- The site is in the Green Belt, which should remain free of structures, the proposal is surely contrary to protection of the Green Belt;
- More traffic would restrict ambulances trying to reach the field in an emergency.

5. 23 letters of support have been received on the following grounds:

- As a local resident it will improve local facilities to enable a higher standard of football;
- There are very few facilities left locally to play a high level of sport, they are pleased that the local club are looking to provide a high standard of facility and sport. The minimal light pollution and sight of pylon are far outweighed by the benefits of providing children and youths with the best sporting facilities and change to progress locally;
- As an ex player it is a positive move to enable the club to move forward yet again as it has been doing since it was formed in 1945;
- It is imperative that the club be allowed to improve the ground to FA standard for entry to the next level of football;
- They do not envisage an increase in traffic as there will be no local derby games;
- The teams provide a lot of support to youngsters who enjoy playing football. The proposal will give the first team the opportunity to play at an improved standard of football, which will encourage the aspiring young players;
- The club is an integral part of the village and should be encouraged;
- It will allow more people to enjoy sports at night as there is nothing else to do in the village at night;
- It is a family club and has done many things to help the community;
- For Charnock to progress into the next league is a great achievement and one the community should be proud of;
- Players have worked hard to move up to the next league;
- Attendances for higher leagues are mainly lower so a significant increase in traffic is very unlikely;
- The club keeps children of all ages occupied and off the streets;

- The lights will be used for a relatively short period of time;
- The flood lights would enhance what is on offer for many youngsters. It is far better for them to be outside playing sport 12 months for the year.

6. Charnock Richard Parish Council has no objection.

### **Consultations**

#### **7. Environmental Health Officer**

Their initial concern with this application was the potential for light overspill having a direct affect on domestic dwellings on Charter Lane, Charnock Richard with the potential for giving rise to a Statutory nuisance (with regard to light). However, they have reviewed the supplementary information submitted by the applicant, in particular the report submitted by their consultant (Surfacelux Ltd). The reports suggest that, due to the flood lamp design, position and angle of incidence that there will be no light overspill outside the boundary of the site. In essence it is suggested that nearby domestic dwellings would not suffer light nuisance due to the operation of these lights.

8. On this basis they would have no objection to the proposal but would suggest that the guidelines and recommendations outlined within the applications report to the application are closely followed to ensure no nuisance occurs to any nearby domestic dwellings.

#### **9. Lancashire County Council (Highways)**

In accordance with the planning statement the floodlighting has been proposed as part of the club's proposals to satisfy their compliance to meet conditional requirements for the upgrade of the football club from a Grade G to Grade H playing status. The football ground presently has provision for 120no car parking spaces.

10. The club have indicated in the statement that as part of their potential move into the next Grade/League, they do not envisage any increase in nuisance parking on Charter Lane.

11. From a traffic viewpoint, they would also tend to agree the proposals are unlikely to lead to any material increase in car parking demand at the football ground; the slight increase a higher league is unlikely to bring about any significant change to existing operational and parking arrangements and need.

12. As such they would have no overriding highway objection to the proposal in principle subject to the inclusion of a condition governing the screening of external lighting subject to a condition that any external source of lighting shall be effectively screened from the view of a driver on the adjoining public highway to avoid glare, dazzle or distraction to passing motorists.

### **Applicants Case**

13. The club purchased the land in 2001 and in 2006 received planning permission to enable the erection of changing facilities, spectator stands and fencing to enclose the existing main pitch. The development has now been completed to comply with the requirements of the Football Association National Ground Grading Category H Standard, which is a requirement for clubs playing at Step 7 Division (West Lancashire League Premier Division) of the non-league football structure.

14. The past decade has been a very successful period of the club playing in the West Lancashire Premier League, winning three league titles, four Lancashire Amateur Shield titles plus numerous other cup wins. With the development of the new football ground now completed, the club is seeking membership into the North West Counties Football League

(NWCFL) which is a Step 5-6 Division of the non-league football structure. Membership into the North West Counties League is conditional that the football ground must comply with the requirements of the Football Association National Ground Grading Category G standard which includes the need for pitch floodlighting to be installed on the ground.

## **Assessment**

### Principle of the development

15. The site is in the Green Belt. In 2005 an application was submitted (ref: 05/00688/FUL) for the erection of changing facilities, spectator stands and fence to enclose existing football pitch, resurfacing of car park and erection of floodlights. The application was approved but the floodlight element of the proposal was removed from the application.
16. It was advised by the case officer at the time that number of lights to be provided was considered excessive and the size and scale of the proposed lights considered too large. The proposed lighting scheme may have caused undue harm to the amenities of local residents and the character of the area, both in terms of the level of illumination and the appearance of the lights themselves due to the number and size of the lights proposed and possible light spillage.
17. The previous lighting proposal proposed 8no. height lighting columns 6m in height before they were removed from the application.
18. At the time of the previous application the relevant national policy in force at the time was PPG2: Green Belts. This stated that essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation which preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it are appropriate development in the Green Belt. This was reflected in Local Plan policy DC1.
19. PPG2 is no longer in force and has been replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework. Local Plan policy DC1 must also be read in the context of the newer NPPF and more weight given to the most up-to-date guidance. The NPPF has removed the requirement for facilities to be 'essential' but rather requires them to be 'appropriate' development in the Green Belt. It is not considered that this test is as stringent as the one in PPG2 and that floodlighting to an existing pitch in the Green Belt is considered appropriate in principle as the openness of the Green Belt will be maintained and will not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
20. The NPPF also states that local planning authorities should take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports and recreation) to improve health and well-being. It also states that to support a prosperous rural economy they should promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages such as sports venues.
21. The site is also covered by Local Plan policy LT14 which states ancillary development such as what is proposed will only be permitted where it will enhance the recreational value of the open space, its size and scale will not detract from the character of the open space, it will not have a detrimental effect on any site of nature conservation value and it will not result in the loss of the pitch or any other sporting/ancillary facility on the site.
22. It is considered that the lighting will enhance the recreational value of the pitch as it will allow it to be used more. The design/character aspect will be considered below. The site is not one

identified for its conservation value and the proposal will not result in the loss of a pitch or any other facility on the site.

23. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle in line with planning policy.

#### Impact on the neighbours

24. One of the main issues with lighting is the impact it may have on neighbouring properties. The application is accompanied by a comprehensive report on the lighting and its spill. The light spill is provided mapped over the pitch and also on an aerial photograph showing it in the context of the surrounding properties. This shows that there will be no light spillage outside the site onto Charter Lane. In addition the report has been considered by the Council's Environmental Health Team and they do not object to the application as it will not result in light spillage to domestic properties. The lights will also have hoods to reflect light back onto the pitch rather than into the night sky. The application is therefore considered acceptable in this respect.

#### Design

25. The lighting will be erected on 4no. 15m high lighting columns. The lighting withdrawn from the previous application was in the form of 8no. 6m high columns.
26. The number and height of the columns are related to each other. The applicant states that a six column design was considered with fewer lights on each but it was considered more columns would have more impact. Lower columns were also considered but this requires shallower lighting angles and leads both to more light spillage outside the site and increased glare on the pitch.
27. The columns at 15m are taller than those removed from the previous application (at 6m) but this allows there to be fewer columns and the light to be more precisely directed on to the pitch. It is considered that minimising the impact of light spillage on neighbouring properties is an important consideration that justifies allowing higher columns, as their height also allows there to be fewer of them.

#### Traffic and Transport

28. One of the points raised by objectors is the impact the lighting will have on Charter Lane by attracting increased crowds to the ground as there are already problems and the lighting will allow them to play in a higher league which will attract more spectators and traffic which cannot fit in the car park and will block Charter Lane.
29. The Council must consider whether any increase in parking is likely to be so significant that will result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or neighbouring properties. Whilst there may be some increase in traffic if the club team is in a higher league, it covers a larger area of the country and therefore for some matches it may result in fewer spectators travelling to watch due to the distance, or if they do attend are likely to travel in fewer vehicles than for more local matches.
30. Lancashire County Council Highways have not objected to the proposal and it is considered that the possible increase in traffic and parking attracted by attendances in a higher league is not sufficient to outweigh the support given to sports facilities by the NPPF. They have requested a condition requiring the lights to be effectively screened from passing motorists, however this condition is not considered precise enough to be enforceable by the Council. The application is accompanied by detailed information on the lighting and it is considered sufficient to be satisfied that the lighting will not result in glare, dazzle or distraction to

motorists. A condition requiring the lighting to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details is considered more appropriate.

#### Public Right of Way

31. Footpath 16 runs adjacent to the pitch to be lit to the south west. It is not considered that lighting will have an unacceptable impact on it as the lights will be used in low or no daylight when the footpath is unlikely to be in use.

#### Ecology

32. The football season and when the lights will be used is during the winter months when bats are hibernating or less active. It is not therefore considered the proposal will have a significant impact on bats.

#### **Overall Conclusion**

33. The application is recommended for approval. The NPPF has relaxed the test for facilities to be 'essential' and the lighting is considered appropriate in the Green Belt to enhance an existing pitch and allow increased use. The NPPF encourages sport and recreation.
34. The 4no. columns although 15m high are considered acceptable when balanced against the need to minimise light spillage and having more of them. It is not considered that a potential increase in traffic and demand for parking is sufficient to outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

#### **Other Matters**

##### Public Consultation

35. The Football Club state they held an open evening for nearby properties which included a short technical presentation and allowed local residents to view the proposed scheme.

#### **Planning Policies**

##### National Planning Policies:

NPPF

##### Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review

Policies: DC1, LT10, LT14, TR4

##### **Planning History**

**05/00688/FUL** - Erection of changing facilities, spectator stands and fence to enclose existing football pitch. Permitted May 2006.

#### **Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission**

##### **Conditions**

- 1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.**  
***Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.***
- 2. The lights shall only be erected so that the light spill is as shown in the floodlight design information by Surfacelux Ltd and the Exterior Lighting Light Spill by Philips shown on LB02\_Charnock Rich\_120208 Rev B and shall be maintained to this standard in perpetuity.**  
***Reason: To ensure that the lights are erected so that they do not result in unacceptable light spillage to neighbouring properties and in accordance with policy EP21A of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review and the NPPF.***

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
- Floodlight Design and Information by Surfacelux Ltd received 21 May 2012
  - Exterior Lighting Light Spill Drawing No. LB02\_Charnock Rich\_120208 Rev B received 21 May 2012
  - 15m M/HT OCT Mind0hinged UL made column heavy duty full height column Drawing no. CC4348 Rev. 00

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning*