

Item B. 3                      07/00232/FUL                      Permit Full Planning Permission

Case Officer                      Mark Moore

Ward                                      Chorley North West

Proposal                              Proposed lighting of the main route through Astley Park  
(4.79m high lighting columns at 28m intervals)

Location                              Astley Park Park Road Chorley Lancashire

Applicant                              Chorley Borough Council

**Proposal:**                              This application has been submitted by agents acting on behalf of Chorley Borough Council. Whilst the applicant in this case is the Council, the proposals put forward have been submitted on behalf of the Astley Park Project and were decided upon by members of a restoration group made up of various interested parties.

The proposal is for lighting of the main footpath route through Astley Park comprising the erection of 37 no. 4.79m high lighting columns set at 28m intervals. The works are being undertaken as part of an ongoing restoration of the park funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Astley Park is classed as an historic park under Policy LT7 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

The proposed lighting columns would comprise a flat, circular dome inclined at a 20 degree angle set on a 4m high straight sided column. The columns would be painted in a colour scheme of medium grey oxide paint. The lighting has been designed in such a way as to provide a diffused light coverage to avoid unnecessary light spillage. The lights would be controlled via a timer to switch off at 12am each night and would be set at 28m intervals in order to ensure an even spread of light along the footpath route.

**Planning Policy**                      EP2                      County Heritage Sites and Local Nature Reserves  
HT13                      Historic Parks and Gardens  
LT7                              Historic Parks and Gardens  
LT14                      Public, Private, Educational and Institutional Playing Fields, Parks and Other Recreational Open Space

**Planning History:**                      There is no planning history relevant to this application.

**Consultations:**                      **The Ramblers Association:** The main route through the park is not a public right of way therefore the Ramblers are unable to comment.

**LCC Ecological Advisor:**                      Concern over possible impact on bats. Recommends that developer submit an ecological assessment to determine any potential impacts and provide basis for mitigation/compensation if impacts are likely.

**English Heritage:** The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of (LPA) specialist conservation advice.

**Community Safety Partnership:** No observations.

**The Friends of Astley Park** instructed the Committee to vigorously oppose the proposal to install lighting and that objections to the lighting were numerous, including the following;

- Safety – the proposal would attract even more anti social elements into the park than already frequent it and would enable them to see their victims from a distance. Question why so much money should be spent to enable drunks to navigate their way home and why taxpayers who live adjacent park should have even more noise and disturbance.
- Environmental Imbalance – Birds and other creatures would have their natural patterns of behaviour affected by lighting.
- Light Pollution – at present there is no light pollution in the park. Question how light pollution can be minimised by introducing lighting where none currently exists?
- Destruction Of Historical Ambience – The HLF funded project is to help restore ‘historic parks’ sympathetically to something like they once were. Question why 21<sup>st</sup> Century lighting is being introduced when the literature states the work is to bring about something much closer to how the park looked 250 years ago. This is incompatible with the historical ambience and character of the park.

The Friends of Astley Park conclude their letter by questioning why bother lighting up a path that is not in fact a public right of way. They also reiterate that they are vigorously opposed to the application and request that the process is not just a foregone conclusion amounting to a ‘rubber

**Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment:**  
No comments to make and no objections to proposal.

- Representations:** Twelve letters have been received objecting to the proposals on the following grounds:
- Proposed lighting will be visually unattractive during daylight hours
  - Lighting will contribute to light pollution
  - Path is not currently lit and has not been for many years
  - No. of people requiring access to park during hours of darkness is minimal and does not justify the cost
  - Posts will be site for graffiti
  - Park is one of few remaining areas that is truly dark at night and should remain so
  - Lighting will encourage congregation of undesirable elements and vandalism
  - Lighting columns close to Astley Hall, which is listed, would be ludicrous and unacceptable
  - Existing trees and wildlife would suffer

- What evidence is there that Chorley residents have requested such a thoroughfare with lighting?
- Additional lighting costs would be better spent on litter removal
- Proposal will not minimise light pollution as stated in application
- Application is incompatible with the ambience and character of Astley Park
- No women would use the park at night, lighting or no lighting
- The park should be completely closed off in the evenings
- Lighting would impact negatively upon local residents
- Astley Park has survived for centuries without lighting.
- There have been instances of crime carried out in the park area over the years but no-one seems to be able to understand that the level of crime will only rise with the introduction of lighting.
- Objector lived In Birmingham where areas became no-go areas at night because lighting was introduced which led to anti-social activity.
- Lighting would impact upon ecological balance of the park and would introduce light pollution to an area in which the night sky can be clearly observed which is unusual so close to a town centre.
- People might be tempted to use the park route at night which could be dangerous as anti-social groups would also use it. Residents should be encouraged to use the safer street alternative and avoid the park altogether after dark.

**Councillor Response:** Cllr Mark Perks has requested that the following issues be given consideration:

- The proposed lighting condition will not be flexible enough to allow for temporary changes to the lighting times eg. to cover public events such as The Concerts in the Park, were an extension should be allowed so the public are able to leave under cover of lighting.
- The proposed switch off time of midnight is too late and should be 10pm or 11pm. Additionally there should be a switch on at 6am for those wishing to travel through the park to work etc. The proposed lighting until midnight seems excessive and could be argued by local residents that an increase in anti-social behaviour may increase as a result.
- No lighting is proposed near the hall or proposed pets corner. This would be useful particularly with the operation of CCTV.
- Clarification is required of the views of the MAPS team.

**Assessment:**

The main issues for consideration in respect of this application are; impact upon the historic environment; impact upon wildlife, and; impact upon the amenity of local residents.

Impact Upon Historic Environment

Policy HT13 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review would not allow development which would cause harm to the historic

character or setting of any part of an historic park. In this case the proposed design of the lighting is contemporary and forms part of wider proposals which reflect an overall design approach for Astley Park 'furniture' to meet the following criteria; robust design; unity of style; function; aesthetic appeal; appropriate materials; innovation or historic in style and; innovative.

The modernistic 'non-pastiche' approach which has been adopted by the Council for Astley Parks lighting represents a desire to reflect key aspects of the existing environment, which does not feature ornate metalwork to any significant extent, and to utilise the aesthetic virtues, materials and pragmatic design of modern solutions over more historic forms of hard landscaping. In doing so however it has been recognised that the new items should not detract from the historic setting of the park in terms of their overall location, colour, number and size.

The proposed lighting columns are modern but very simplistic in design and have been selected on the basis that they are perceived to be both elegant and contemporary. On this basis it is considered that, whilst not to everyone's taste, the lighting columns will provide a more up to date approach to the development of the park without compromising its heritage value.

#### Impact Upon Wildlife

The only concern raised by the LCC Ecological advisor relates to the potential impact of the proposed lighting upon bat roosts that may be present in the trees. Following advice from a specialist advisor the scheme has been revised in the following ways;

- Omission of one column over the dam to ensure the lake remains as dark as possible
- Safeguarding an oak tree with a potential bat roost in it
- Omission of all floodlights for trees

The latter of the above proposals would not have required planning permission.

It is considered that the proposed lighting would not have any adverse ecological issues. It should also be noted that the lighting would be operated on a timer that would switch the lighting off at 12am thereby ensuring the park would not be illuminated throughout the night.

#### Impact Upon Amenity

Concerns have been raised by local residents regarding the principle of providing lighting within the park and in particular over the potential increase in anti-social behaviour that may arise. The advice of the Community Safety Partnership would suggest that this would not necessarily be the case as appropriate lighting can provide natural surveillance of the park by promoting increased use and making it more difficult for anti-social activity to be undertaken without being observed. The lighting proposals are seen by the Astley Park Group as a fundamental requirement to meet their stated aim of making 'accessible as much of the park as possible within the limitations of conservation, safety and operational requirements'. It remains a finely balanced argument as to

whether the lighting would give rise to an increase in anti-social behaviour and conflicting views on this issue can probably be given equal weight. For this reason it would be difficult to justify a refusal of planning permission on amenity grounds, particularly as no specific objections have been raised to the proposed lighting by the Community Safety Partnership. In addition to his formal comments the Architectural Liaison Officer wrote to the Council highlighting the merits of lighting as a means of diminishing opportunities for crime and disorder but did not specifically offer any comment on the proposed lighting for Astley Park. The benefits of lighting were outlined in that letter as being;

- Increased potential for natural surveillance
- Increased social surveillance
- Increased civic pride

The Architectural Liaison Officer also stated that;

‘Lighting is only effective if done in conjunction with other crime prevention measures and needs to be considered on a case by case basis.

Other objections relate to concerns over light pollution. In this case the lighting would be diffused in order to overcome excessive light spillage and it is not considered that this would be a significant problem. Additionally, the timer control would ensure that there could be no issue of light pollution for the main part of the hours of darkness.

**Conclusion:** It is considered that the proposal will have no significant visual impact or impact upon neighbourhood amenity and will not raise any ecological issues. Accordingly it is recommended that planning permission should be approved.

**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 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.*

2. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme for the proposed hours of illumination of the proposed lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: To safeguard the amenities of local residents.*

3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved full details of the external finishing materials of the lighting columns shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the locality and in accordance with Policy GN5 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a plan detailing the lux levels provided by the lighting shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

*Reason: To safeguard the amenities of local residents.*

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