

SECTION '2' – Applications meriting special consideration

**Application No :** 13/00839/FULL1

**Ward:**  
**Bromley Common And  
Keston**

**Address :** Ravens Wood School Oakley Road  
Bromley BR2 8HP

**OS Grid Ref:** E: 541797 N: 165342

**Applicant :** Ravens Wood School Governing Body **Objections :** YES

**Description of Development:**

Eight 16m high floodlighting columns to existing all weather pitch

Key designations:

Conservation Area: Bromley Hayes And Keston Commons

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Birds

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area

Green Belt

London City Airport Safeguarding

**Proposal**

Planning permission was granted under ref. 10/00987 for an all-weather sports pitch, with 3m high fencing. Permission is now sought for the addition of eight 16m high floodlighting columns and floodlights to the pitch. In addition, permission is sought for the removal of Condition 5 of the original permission for the pitch, which restricts its use to sporting activities in association with the use of the school only and for no other purposes (without prior approval in writing from the Local Planning Authority). This application is the subject of a separate report which is also to be found on this agenda.

The proposed use of the pitch will be as follows:

- Monday - Friday - School use from October to March from 15.15 - 18.00
- Monday - Friday - Partner Organisation year round from 18.00 - 21.30
- Saturdays - School or Partner Organisations 08.00 - 18.00
- Sundays - No use proposed

The application is accompanied by technical details of the floodlighting, a Design and Access Statement, and supporting letters from the School's Principal, the Rugby Football Union's Area Facilities Manager for London and South East, the General Secretary of the Kent School's Football Association, the Treasurer of

Orpington Football Club, as well as a number of e-mails in support from parents of pupils at the school and coaches of local sports clubs.

The Design and Access Statement makes the following points in support of the application:

- the proposal is for the installation of floodlights to illuminate the All Weather Sports Pitch, allowing extended use during the winter months for school use. In addition, the removal of Condition 5 of the current planning consent is sought, to allow community use of the facilities out of normal school use. This would primarily be for the School's partner sports organisations and those associated with its pupils
- the All Weather Pitch has been one of the biggest assets to the pupils experience and development in recent years. However the maintenance and eventual replacement in approximately 8 years is very costly and money obtained from the potential community club use will be essential in the up keep and continuation of the facility. Any additional monies obtained would enable further educational development of the school
- it is known that other schools in the local vicinity, ( Langley Park Boys, Langley Park Girls, Darrick Wood, Ravensbourne and Bishop Justus to name a few ) already have both floodlighting to their all-weather pitches and the ability to offer the facilities for local community use. While all locations are slightly different, each local school is set in similar surroundings with both residential and Green Belt issues to consider. The School believes that should permission not be granted its pupils will be restricted in a way that other local pupils are currently not
- lights will be positioned to give maximum light to the pitch with minimum light spillage. Technical calculations have confirmed that 16m is the optimum height required to give the required lux levels to the playing surface whilst causing the minimum light spillage.
- the School has consulted with local residents and generally have had very positive comments, and will continue to work with residents regarding the usage of the pitch and will consider any additional measures required to ensure neighbours maintain the view and privacy already enjoyed
- floodlight usage times will be reasonably set in line with other local schools. Lighting will only be required for school use during the winter months, and will only be used throughout the year when required
- the lighting has been chosen and designed to achieve maximum playing conditions whilst having minimum light spillage and impact on the openness and visual amenities. Technical data provided shows no or minimal light spillage into neighbouring properties. It is also believed that, the lower pitch and higher elevation of the New Hall in relation to the proposed lighting, will detract from the view of the lighting columns. It is therefore believed that the lights will not impact significantly on the residents' current view. Time restrictions will be installed within the lighting units to prevent usage after the predetermined time
- while potential noise is a recognised concern, the school will agree to reasonable usage times, in line with the residents, other local schools and LBB conditions

- with only one pitch for hire, community use at any one time will be for a limited number of occupants only. For this reason noise is not expected to exceed current levels already associated with school activities, during the day or weekends. School activities will continue to take priority over community bookings. Normal community use will be for training so will not generally attract any additional spectators.
- hire of facilities is intended for Partner Organisations and clubs that the school currently work closely with, or directly benefit our local students
- many of the clubs expressing an interest are Youth Teams so community use would not be much different to the day to day use of the school
- the hire of the facilities will be managed on site at all times and any contravention to lighting times or excessive noise will not be tolerated
- with regards to the openness of the surrounding view, the School does not envisage this being significantly affected by the erection of the floodlights. The pitch is located in the more built up corner of the site, bordering to the south, the New Hall and Sports Facilities. The location of the pitch itself is not currently seen to affect the openness of the school playing fields to the east or the residential property to the west, or subsequent woodland further to the west. It is not envisaged that, despite the required height of the columns, that these will have any additional impact on openness than the buildings already in this location
- the 8 columns themselves are narrow in diameter with the 2 lighting units suspended from a horizontal beam. The narrow diameter of the columns, the size and construction of the lighting units, the column spacing of approximately 30m apart and sympathetic colour and design to the surroundings mean that there is not expected to be a significant impact to the surrounding environment.

A further statement in response to local representations has been submitted by the Applicant (received 15th May 2013). This is as follows:

- In times of austerity schools are increasingly employing entrepreneurial strategies to increase revenue. We firmly believe that our students deserve the right to access first class facilities in line with their counterparts at many other Bromley schools. We conducted a thorough face to face consultation with adjoining residents.
- Many perceptions seem to have been based upon residents experiences of entirely different local sports facilities, in particular Homesdale FC. We should like to reassure residents that our application is significantly smaller in scale and cannot therefore be compared to such venues. Our application applies to only one single rugby/football pitch and therefore a maximum of approximately 30 participants at any given time.
- Concerns over excess noise - a freedom of information request has revealed that similar school facilities in Bromley have incurred just one associated complaint in the past 3 years. Additionally, it should be noted that a typical school weekend at Ravens Wood will see several hundred sports participants using the school field and we are yet to receive a single complaint in respect of excess noise. Our evening facility manager will also be responsible for participant's adherence to a strict noise and behaviour usage policy that will be in place.

- Concerns over light spillage and impact on wildlife - Our light spillage surveys conclude that light spillage is well within permitted guidelines and no concerns have been raised by the environmental planning officer. This efficiency can be attributed to the modern technology that we propose to use.
- Concerns over security - Residents may not be aware that the school is currently open until 10pm during week days. Should permission be granted, it is our intention to employ an evening facility manager who will be responsible for onsite security and management of the pitch. This will be in addition to the onsite caretaking provision currently in operation.
- Concerns over excess traffic - The highways agency have raised no concerns in this respect. We would like to reiterate that we do not expect a noticeable increase in traffic due to the low numbers of participants. We have more than adequate onsite parking to facilitate bookings. Participants will not be permitted to enter the site via Barnet Wood Road.
- Concerns over late night usage - We have proposed that the final booking end at 21.30.

## **Location**

The school and playing fields are located to the south of Barnet Wood Road, to the west of Oakley Road and to the north of Croydon Road, close to the junction known as Keston Mark. The site lies wholly within the Green Belt and there is a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation to the east.

## **Comments from Local Residents**

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application by letter, a site notice displayed and an advertisement published in the local press. Representations received can be summarised as follows:

- increased noise and disturbance
- floodlights will detract from views and privacy
- undesirable visual impact and light spillage
- increased traffic (including use of Barnet Wood Road)
- unacceptable impact on Green Belt
- conditions on original permission restrict addition of floodlighting and use of pitch
- school will benefit from proposal at expense of amenities of neighbours
- loss of outlook
- concerns that floodlights will create security risk for neighbours by illuminating back gardens
- negative impact on wildlife in adjacent woodland and gardens

A letter of objection, signed by a number of residents of Barnet Wood Road was also received.

One letter of support, from the Kent Schools' Rugby Football Union, was received.

## **Comments from Consultees**

Environmental Health (pollution) raised no objections in principle to permission being granted. However, it was suggested that a condition be imposed, to restrict the times and days of use, consistent with other sports pitches in the area where residents are so close.

## **Planning Considerations**

The application should be considered against the following policies:

### Unitary Development Plan

- BE1 Design of New Development
- G1 The Green Belt
- C8 Dual Community Use of Educational Facilities
- NE2 Development and Nature Conservation Sites

### London Plan

- 3.19 Sports Facilities
- 7.15 Reducing Noise and Enhancing Soundscapes
- 7.16 Green Belt

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is of relevance; Section 9 'Protecting Green Belt land' in particular. The NPPF advises Local Authorities to plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, including the provision of opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation (para. 81).

## **Planning History**

There is extensive planning history at the site. Of recent relevance is the grant of planning permission under ref. 10/00987 for an all-weather sports pitch, with 3m high fencing. An application for a minor-material amendment to this permission was approved under ref. 11/02890 to allow an increase in the height of the perimeter fencing to 5m.

Members may wish to take note that planning permission was recently granted at appeal (Feb 2013) for a new all-weather pitch (for dual community and school use) with floodlighting at Bishop Justus School (located around 1.5km to the north-east of the site and within the Green Belt) following the refusal of planning permission by the Council under ref. 12/00642.

## **Conclusions**

The main issues for consideration in this case will be the impact of the floodlighting and columns on the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt and the amenities of neighbouring residential properties (both in terms of any light spillage/glare and visual impact, and noise and disturbance arising from the increased use that the lights will facilitate). Members will also need to bear in mind

that a separate application has been submitted to remove the restrictive condition imposed on the original grant of planning permission to allow community use of the pitch, which will, in conjunction with the floodlighting, result in a more intensive use of the existing facility at the School. The specific impacts of that proposal are assessed within a separate report, also to be found on this agenda.

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF advises that the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries is an exception to inappropriate development as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposed floodlights could, in light of this guidance, be considered an appropriate facility to support outdoor sport and recreation, and may therefore be considered as acceptable Green Belt development in principle. Whilst the lighting columns would, at 16m in height, result in a degree of harm to the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt, Members will note that the proposal would provide improved training facilities for the School itself, allowing greater levels of use during the darker winter months. In conjunction with the proposed removal of Condition 5 of the original permission for the all-weather pitch, community benefits will also arise, allowing access to a high-quality sports facility for local sports clubs and organisations. Therefore, whilst the proposal would give rise to a degree of actual harm to the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt by virtue of the height and number of floodlighting columns proposed, it may be considered that the benefits to the school and community that will arise would outweigh this harm, and constitute the very special circumstances to allow planning permission to be granted.

Turning to the impact of the proposal on the amenities of neighbouring residents, the proposal will have a visual impact, again as a result of the height and number of floodlighting columns, and the illumination itself when the lights are on. This will particularly be the case for the dwellings at Woodside, Nos. 1 & 2 Foresters Cottages, Woodside and Beeson, Barnet Wood Road, all of which adjoin the site the north/north-west. The columns will however be relatively slender structures, and any visual impact will be limited. With regard to the lighting, the application includes a technical specification, which has been reviewed by the Environmental Health Officer who has raised no technical objections, subject to condition. Having regard to this advice it is not expected that the lights will give rise to a significant loss of amenity through light spillage/glare, although it is recognised that the properties in question will look out over an area of bright illumination, which would previously have been in darkness during the evenings. For this reason and having regard to the advice of the Environmental Health Officer, it is recommended that if Members are minded to grant planning permission for the lights, their use cease at 9.30pm Monday to Fridays and 6pm on Saturdays, with no use at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays, to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring residents.

With regard to any noise and disturbance arising from the use of the pitch, the floodlighting will facilitate its use over longer hours, particularly during winter months. This will inevitably give rise to a degree of additional noise, although it is anticipated that the School would be able to exercise a degree of control over the behaviour of its pupils to seek to keep noise to a minimum. As above, the

requirement for the operation of the lights ceases at a reasonable hour will serve to control the use of the pitch and therefore the degree of noise arising.

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on files refs. 13/00836, 13/00839 and 12/00642, excluding exempt information.

## **RECOMMENDATION: PERMISSION**

Subject to the following conditions:

- 1      ACA01      Commencement of development within 3 yrs  
ACA01R      A01 Reason 3 years
- 2      The floodlighting hereby permitted shall not be used after 21:30hrs Monday to Friday or after 18:00hrs on Saturdays, and shall not be used at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays, without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** In the interest of the amenities of neighbouring residential properties, and to comply with Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan.

- 3      ACK01      Compliance with submitted plan  
ACK05R      K05 reason

## **Reasons for granting permission:**

In granting permission the Local Planning Authority had regard to the following policies:

Unitary Development Plan

- BE1    Design of New Development
- G1    The Green Belt
- C8    Dual Community Use of Educational Facilities
- NE2   Development and Nature Conservation Sites

London Plan

- 3.19   Sports Facilities
- 7.15   Reducing Noise and Enhancing Soundscapes
- 7.16   Green Belt

The development is considered to be satisfactory in relation to the following:

- (a)    the impact of the development on the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt and the very special circumstances demonstrated
- (b)    the character of the development in the surrounding area
- (c)    the impact on the amenities of the occupiers of adjacent and nearby properties
- (d)    the community policies of the development plan
- (e)    the design policies of the development plan

(f) the transport policies of the development plan  
and having regard to all other matters raised.



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"This plan is provided to identify the location of the site and should not be used to identify the extent of the application site"

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