



NORTHAMPTON
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 6th April 2010
DIRECTORATE: Planning and Regeneration
HEAD OF PLANNING: Susan Bridge

N/2010/0162 Installation of 2no. 10 metre high floodlights.
MUGA, Bondfield Avenue, Northampton

WARD: St David

APPLICANT: Mrs Jeanette Pidgen (NBC)
AGENT: None

REASON: Borough Council development

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION BY NBC:

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 **APPROVAL** subject to conditions and for the following reason:

The proposed floodlights are considered to be of acceptable appearance, they will not unduly harm the living conditions of nearby residents and will provide a valuable leisure facility for the local community, particularly young people during evening hours in the winter months. For these reasons the proposals are considered to accord saved Local Plan policies L1, E20 and E40 and the Planning Out Crime SPD and no other material considerations indicate otherwise.

2. THE PROPOSAL

2.1 The application is by Northampton Borough Council for two 10 metre high steel columns topped with two 250-watt floodlights, positioned north of the existing multi-use games area (MUGA). The proposed lighting would be directed down and southward to illuminate the MUGA.

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The application site is on Council-owned St David's open space, southeast of public and private housing near Eastern Avenue South on

Bondfield Avenue and Newnham Road. The wider open space is largely grass with occasional trees and hedges.

- 3.2 The site is presently a metal fenced multi-use games area (MUGA) with football goals and basketball hoops measuring 28 metres long and 17 metres wide. It is nearest to lock-up units 15 to 20 metres to the north that are accessed off of Bondfield Avenue. 30 metres to the west are the garden boundaries of semi-detached houses on Bondfield Avenue and 50-60 metres to the northeast are blocks of flats that directly front onto the open space area without private outdoor areas.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 None relevant.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The current Development Plan comprises of the East Midlands Regional Plan, the saved policies of the Northamptonshire County Structure Plan and Northampton Local Plan 1997.

5.2 National Policies:

Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

5.3 East Midlands Regional Plan 2009

Policy 2 – Promoting Better Design

Encourages highway access and parking that improves both safety and the quality of public space, whilst seeking design that reduces crime and the fear of crime.

5.4 Northampton Borough Local Plan

E20 New Development - seeks contextual design and protects the amenity of neighbours who may be affected by development

E40 Crime - seeks to prevent crime and vandalism and is embellished in the Planning Out Crime SPG.

L1 Existing Recreation Facilities - protects identified spaces such as this from inappropriate degradation or loss by development of other uses.

5.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

6. CONSULTATIONS / REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 **Public Protection (NBC)** - No objections providing the lights are not on after 10.00pm.

6.2 **Police** - No objections and comments that this is a good site in an area where local young people have complained of little to do in the evenings. Concur that lights should be turned off at 10.00pm

6.3 **One objection from a nearby resident of the flats on Newnham Road** stating:

- There is no fence or defensible space next to their flats to stop intrusion.
- Users of the MUGA are already causing nuisance when passing these flats in the summer months and this will extend to the winter if the lights are installed.
- Makes suggestions for stopping youths getting past flats or diverting them on the journey from Newnham Road shops and the MUGA.

7. APPRAISAL

7.1 The main planning issues that arise with this proposal are the visual impact, the effect on living conditions of nearby residents, the crime and disorder impact and community benefits (or otherwise) this might provide. These issues must be considered in the light of saved Policies E20, E40 and L1 of the Local Plan and the Planning Out Crime SPG.

Appearance

7.2 The proposed lights are proposed to be mounted on two 10 metre columns and would be visible over longer distances, particularly to the south over Kingsthorpe Golf Course. Similarly, the lights will be tall enough to be prominent, especially in the evening, when viewed from positions such as Bondfield Avenue. Nonetheless, the proposed columns would be little higher than normal street lamps on surrounding main roads and as such they will be no more than normal suburban lighting features in keeping with the general appearance of the area.

7.3 Use of the lights would only be required during the winter months thereby further diminishing their visual impact and if suitable hours of operation are applied, they will not be apparent late at night.

Residential amenity

7.4 The lights point away from the nearest houses and flats. The applicant has submitted estimated light levels in nearby areas and only five metres behind the columns (well short of neighbouring houses and flats), the light levels are lower than 2 lux, which is beneath the maximum standards recommended by the Institute of Lighting Engineers for light spill to residential properties in this type of area. The Council's environmental health service, Public Protection, has no objections to the proposals in terms of light, but recommend that the lights be switched off no later than 10.00pm. In view of their visual

impact and disturbance that can be caused later in the evening in the wider area, a 10.00pm curfew is considered an acceptable measure to be applied by planning condition (see recommended condition 2 in section 9 below).

Crime and disturbance

- 7.5 Clearly, having the MUGA lit on winter evenings is intended to attract young people to this space to congregate, play sport and socialise. The objecting neighbour has highlighted nuisance issues. Nonetheless, it should be bourn in mind that these concerns relate to young people making their way to the MUGA rather than to use of the MUGA itself. It should also be noted that the antisocial activity cited by the neighbour might not necessarily be caused by users of the MUGA but by other passing youths. Indeed the applicant states that the MUGA lighting project is intended to tackle identified anti-social behaviour elsewhere and concentrate youth activity in a relatively remote but still overlooked location.
- 7.6 It is considered that there are clear social benefits of having a play space available all year for local young people that will encourage activity and divert nuisance congregation from more sensitive areas, such as outside shops and in residential streets. The additional problems created of youths in transit to the MUGA are relatively modest when compared with the gains that may be achieved, and whilst this will be of little comfort to residents such as the objector to this application, solutions such as creating defensible areas around the flats can be considered separate to the deliberation of this application.
- 7.7 It is also material that the MUGA can currently be widely used in the evenings in any event, particularly in the light 6 months of the spring and summer. The more intensive use of the MUGA arising from the proposal is therefore likely in the winter months only. Ensuring the lights are switched off after 10pm will minimise the risk of late night use and disturbance at particularly anti-social hours of the night. The Police are happy with this approach and do not object.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In summary, the visual impact and effect on living conditions of those nearby to the MUGA is considered acceptable, especially when balanced against the important social benefits of lighting this space in the winter months giving local young people a place to congregate, diverting people away from residential areas and giving youngsters a place to exercise should address crime, disorder and loitering. Overall, crime and the fear of crime should be reduced by these proposals and this accords with saved Policy E40 and the Planning Out Crime SPG.

9. CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The lighting shall not be operated between the hours of 2200 and 0800 on any day unless otherwise agreed in writing in advance by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of local residential amenity and to minimise disorder in accordance with saved Policies E20 and E40 of the Northampton Local Plan.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

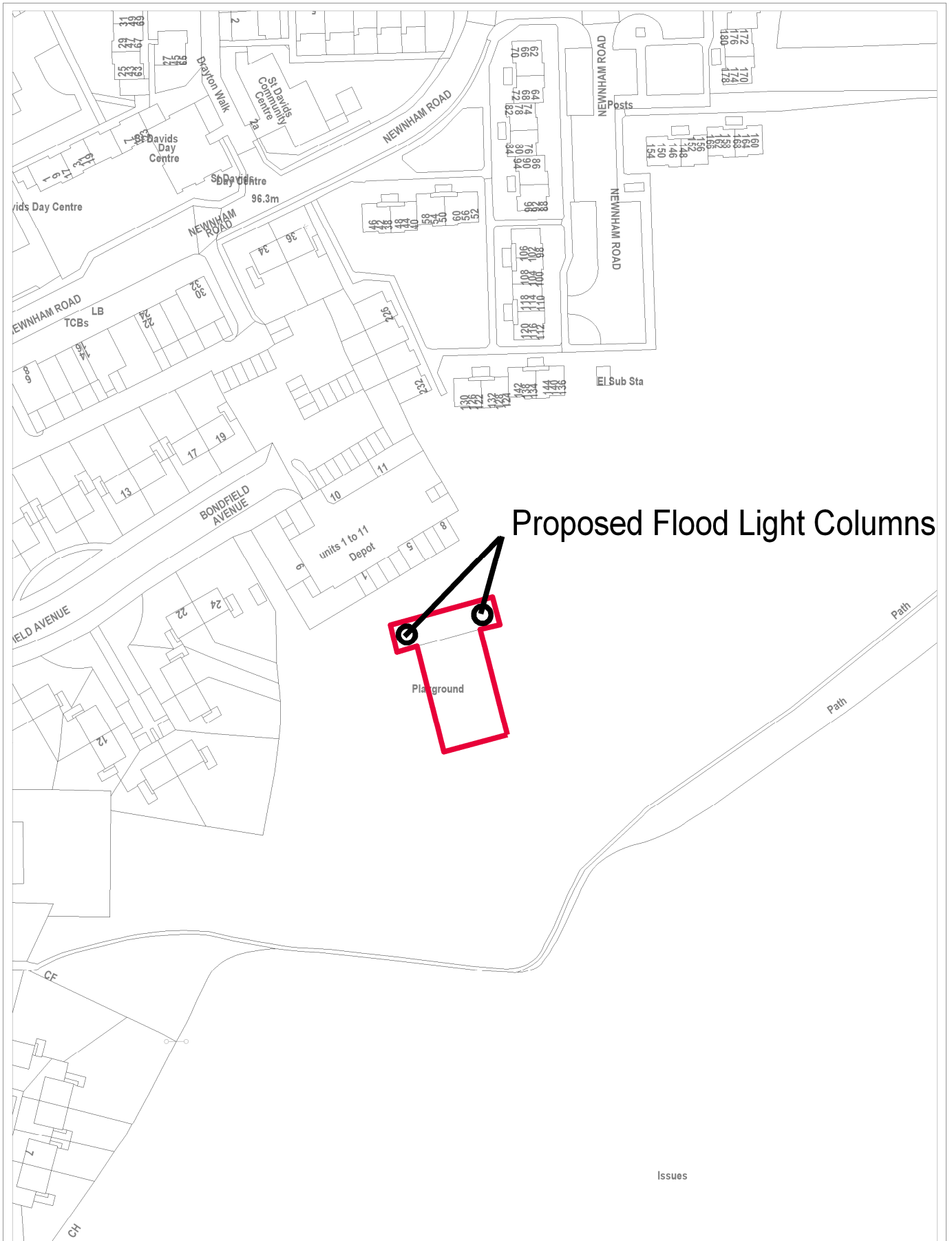
11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None.

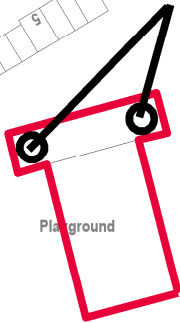
12. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 12.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.

Position:	Name/Signature:	Date:
Author:	Richard Boyt	18/03/10
Development Control Manager Agreed:	Gareth Jones	22/03/10



Proposed Flood Light Columns



Playground

Issues



Name: COMMITTEE APRIL 6TH
 Date: 22nd March 2010
 Scale: 1:1250
 Dept: Planning
 Project: Location Plan

Title

MUGA Bondfield Avenue

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