

Planning Committee

Application Address	Cobham Sports And Social Club Merley Park Road Poole BH21 3DA
Proposal	Installation of additional Flood lighting to the existing artificial grass sports pitch (Retrospective)
Application Number	P/26/00440/FUL
Applicant	Cobham Sports and Social Club
Agent	Mr Ben Green Chapman Lily Planning Ltd
Ward and Ward Member(s)	Bearwood & Merley
Report status	Public
Meeting date	14/05/2026
Summary of Recommendation	Grant in accordance with the details set out below
Reason for Referral to Planning Committee	Ward Cllr call in for reasons: The application affects a small number of residents directly. It also influences possible road safety. At the adjacent junction there have been 7 road traffic incidents over the last 15 years involving 17 vehicles and 9 casualties, one of being serious. Two of them only involved one vehicle and was, probably, a result of misinterpreting the road layout. The glare from the lights will compound these incidents.
Case Officer	Dominika Robbins
Is the Proposal EIA Development?	No

Description of Proposal

1. This application is for the Installation of additional Flood lighting to the existing artificial grass sports pitch (Retrospective)

Description of Site and Surroundings

2. Cobham Sports and Social Club is situated to the southwestern edge of a wider site with playing fields to the east, miniature railway and radio clubs to the south and a golf club to the north. A band of mature Poplars separates the golf club and the playing fields. The part of the Club site that is a subject of this application is used as a football pitch approved under P/25/00992/FUL.
3. To the east, the site abuts a row of dwellings and other buildings in commercial use, which front Gravel Hill and Merley Park Road respectively.

Relevant Planning History

4. **P/25/00992/FUL** - Erect an artificial grass sports pitch with associated perimeter fencing and landscaping.

Constraints

5. The site lies within the South East Dorset Greenbelt. There are no protected trees on the site, however, the trees on adjacent land are protected by TPOs.
6. The site is circa 500m from Ashington Conservation Area; however, it is not within its boundaries.

Public Sector Equalities Duty

7. In accordance with section 149 Equality Act 2010, in considering this proposal due regard has been had to the need to —
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Other relevant duties

8. In accordance with regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (“the Habitat Regulations”), for the purposes of this application, appropriate regard has been had to the relevant Directives (as defined in the Habitats Regulations) in so far as they may be affected by the determination.
9. For the purposes of section 40 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, in assessing this application, consideration has been given as to any appropriate action to further the “general biodiversity objective”.
10. For the purposes of this application, in accordance with section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998, due regard has been had to, including the need to do all that can reasonably be done to prevent, (a) crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely

affecting the local environment); (b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area; and (c) re-offending in its area.

11. For the purposes of this report regard has been had to the Human Rights Act 1998, the Human Rights Convention and relevant related issues of proportionality.

Consultations

12. BCP Highway Services – no objection
13. BCP Environmental Health Officer – No objection
14. BCP Ecology Officer – No objection subject to appropriate condition.

Representations

15. Site notices were posted outside the site on 20 February 2026 with an expiry date for consultation of 13 March 2026. 4 letters of representation have been received (2 from the same address) raising objection to the proposal. The issues raised comprise the following:

- Light protrusion,
- Loss of sky view for residential properties located to the south east of the application site,
- Previous permission should be investigated and reviewed
- Lighting which seems to involve neglect of respect for biodiversity and its sensitivity to light at night.
- According to the previous approval, the pitched shall be used by club members only but it is constantly rent out to third parties

16. Officer comment: Any alleged breach of planning should be reported to the council's enforcement team, and any concerns regarding the original concerns should be submitted via the council's complaint process.

Key Issue(s)

17. The 4 flood lights on the new columns and new lights on the existing columns that are a subject of this application have been installed and therefore, the application is retrospective. The key issue(s) involved with this proposal are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area, including green belt
- Impact on the neighbouring amenity
- Impact on parking and highway safety
- Biodiversity considerations

18. These issues will be considered along with other matters relevant to this proposal below.

Policy Context

19. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan for an area, except where material considerations indicate otherwise. In reaching this decision the policies in the

Development Plan for the area were taken into account. The development plan in this case comprises the Poole Local Plan, relevant local documents and the National Planning Policy Framework 2024. These include specifically the following policies:

Poole Local Plan (Adopted November 2018)

PP01 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

PP02 Amount and Broad Location of Development

PP26 Sports, recreation and community facilities

PP27 Design

PP32 Poole's Nationally, European and Internationally Important Sites

PP33 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

PP34 Transport strategy

PP35 A Safe, Connected and Accessible Transport Network

PP39 Delivering Poole's Infrastructure

Supplementary Planning Documents:

BCP Parking Standards SPD (adopted January 2021)

The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 SPD (Adopted March 2020)

The Dorset Heathlands Interim Air Quality Strategy SPD (2020-2025)

The Bournemouth and Poole Sports Facilities Strategy 2014-2026

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024 as amended)

Planning Assessment

The principle of the development within Green Belt:

20. The application site is located within Green Belt. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF advises that when considering any planning application, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
21. The proposed additional flood lighting is associated with the previously approved pitched and due to its nature and minor scale do not harm the openness of the Green Belt. The row of trees shown on the plans number 420.GA.03b and 420.GA.01.02b is not part of this application as it is proposed to be planted beyond the red line.

22. The proposal does not, therefore, be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt and does not harm its openness that would comply with the provisions of Policy PP2 of the Poole Local Plan and Section 13 of the NPPF.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area:

23. Policy PP27 of the Poole Local Plan 2018 requires a good standard of design in all new developments. It supports development which reflects or enhances local patterns of development and neighbouring buildings by virtue of their layout and siting; height and scale; bulk and massing; materials and detailing; landscaping and visual impact.
24. The proposed 4 flood lights installed on the new columns of the height of 6m – 2 to the south west of the application site and 2 to its north eastern side together with new floodlights installed on the existing columns are implemented to facilitate the use of the existing pitch and due to their minor scale do not materially harm the character or appearance of the surrounding area. The previously existing flood lights were visible from the nearby residential development; however, they, together with the new lighting remain appropriate in scale and design for the use and function of the site and not as overly prominent in their setting.
25. The proposal, therefore, complies with the provisions of Policy PP27 of the Poole Local Plan.

Impact on the neighbouring amenity:

26. Policy PP27 outlines that development should not result in a harmful impact upon amenity for the local residents or future occupiers in terms of overshadowing, loss of light, f privacy, whether the development is overbearing or oppressive, along with noise and artificial light intrusion.
27. With regards to residential amenity, the site is located some 12m-16m away from the rear boundaries of the residential properties in Oakley Hill, which back into the site. The proposed additional lighting are thin in profile, and given this and the distance separation, would not cause any harm to neighbouring amenity by way of shading, l privacy, or overbearing impacts.
28. The neighbours raised concerns regarding loss of sky view due to installation of the additional lights, however, views are not protected in planning terms.
29. The application has been assessed by the BCP Environmental Health who concluded that submitted lighting information demonstrates sufficiently that the provision of illumination for the safe use of the pitch is adequate and appropriate, and that the control of light spill to surrounding residential properties is effective, such that the risk of light nuisance is satisfactorily mitigated. They stated that the updated modelling demonstrates that predicted light levels at nearby residential receptors are now consistent with the relevant criteria set out in ILP Guidance Note 1 (GN01/21): The Reduction of Obtrusive Light, which forms the primary reference for assessing light intrusion and residential amenity impacts. In addition, the proposed 21:30 lighting curfew provides an important and appropriate safeguard in terms of protecting residential amenity during the later evening period and is consistent with the principles of GN01/21 in applying temporal controls to limit obtrusive light.
30. Regarding noise, the current application is to replace the existing lights serving the football pitch and 4 new ones. Currently there is a condition imposed to the permission for the artificial grass sports pitch limiting use of this pitch to 8am to 9:30pm Mondays to Sundays, including Bank Holidays. The floodlights associated with the previously approved development were also time limited to be use from dusk till 9.40pm Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays. These conditions still apply.

31. It would be reasonable to impose the condition to the current permission to limit time of lighting from dusk to 9.30pm every day to reduce their impact on the neighbours in terms of artificial light intrusion.
32. Therefore, subject to aforementioned condition, the scheme is in line with the provision of Policy PP27 of the Poole Local Plan.

Impact on parking and highway safety:

33. Policies PP34 and PP35 of the Poole Local Plan give a number of requirements that new development should achieve with regards to highway, pedestrian and other sustainable transport matters. Among other aspects, they seek to ensure a satisfactory means of access and provision for parking, in accordance with adopted standards.
34. The proposal has been assessed by the Council's Transportation Officer who has supported the proposal and advised that the proposal would have no adverse impact on highway safety.
35. It is therefore considered that the proposal would comply with the provisions of Policies PP34 and PP35 of the Poole Local Plan (November 2018).

Biodiversity considerations:

36. Paragraph 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, under the heading of 'duty to conserve biodiversity' states "every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."
37. The NPPF at chapter 15 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment' sets out government views on minimising the impacts on biodiversity, providing net gains where possible and contributing to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. The Local Plan Policy PP33 – biodiversity and geodiversity, sets out policy requirements for the protection and where possible, a net gain in biodiversity.
38. The application site is close to the established ecological network, which includes Dorset heathland (SAC, Ramsar and SPA sites), as well as Canford heath SSSI, Leigh Common LNR, Corfe and Barrow Hills LNR and SSSI. These sites have been identified as potentially being impacted by the proposed development.
39. The site and its surroundings offer suitable habitats to badgers and hedgehogs, with limited suitability for bats and foraging birds. No amphibians were recorded on site or its vicinity and the site contain limited suitable habitat for reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. The site is in constant use which precludes its suitability as a terrestrial habitat.
40. The submitted Lighting Calculation states that lights are cool white of 5000K LEDs and that the lighting is programmed to switch off from 9:30pm. The Council's Biodiversity Officer assessed the proposal and raised no objection to the use of the new flood lights and their impact on any protected species near the site subject to a condition to limit usage of lighting from dusk until 9:30pm.

41. Therefore, subject to aforementioned condition, the proposal is acceptable and in accordance with the relevant legislation and Policies PP32, PP33 and PP39 of the Poole Local Plan.
42. In addition, a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) is required as per the Environment Act 2021 though exemptions apply. This proposal is exempt as it is de minimis as there is no more than 25sqm of habitat or 5m of linear habitat impacted by the development.
43. Therefore, proposal is acceptable and in accordance with the relevant legislation and Policy PP33 of the Poole Local Plan.

Waste collection considerations:

44. Due to the nature of the proposed scheme, it is not expected that it would have any additional impact on the existing waste collection arrangements on site, which would be considered acceptable in that regard.

Other considerations:

45. The application site is located in an area safeguarded for minerals extraction; however, the site is used as an established sports centre and therefore the proposed development does not prejudice any land designation in that regard.

Planning Balance/Conclusion

46. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan for an area, except where material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan in this case comprises the Poole Local Plan (2018). The proposed scheme does accord with the Development Plan as a whole. It has no materially harmful impact on the visual amenity of the area, residential amenities of the adjoining and nearby properties, subject to appropriate condition, and all other material planning matters discussed within the report above.
47. In view of the above assessment, the proposal is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions outlined in the report.

Recommendation

48. Grant, subject to the following:

Conditions

1. The floodlights hereby permitted, associated with the sports pitch shall only be used from dusk till 9.30pm Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays.

Reason: In order to control the floodlighting and their associated impacts on the amenities of nearby residential properties and protected species near the site in accordance with Policies PP27, PP32, PP33 and PP39 of the Poole Local Plan (November 2018) and NPPF.

2. The development hereby permitted shall only be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawing no. 420.GA.01.02b Proposed Site Plan received 02/02/2026

Drawing no. 420.GA.03b Proposed Site Plan and Elevations received 02/02/2026

Drawing no. 420.GA.01.01c Block Location Plan received 10/02/2026

Drawing no. P25023-DRG-PL-03 Rev. P01 Lighting Calculation received 02/03/2026

Drawing no. P25023-DRG-PL-02 Rev.P01 Lighting Construction Layout received 02/03/2026

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

Informatives

1. In accordance with paragraph 39 of the revised NPPF the Council, as Local Planning Authority, takes a positive, creative and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. The Council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions. In this instance:

The applicant was provided with the opportunity to address issues identified by the case officer and permission was granted.

2. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition ("the biodiversity gain condition") that development may not begin unless: (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan. The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These are listed in paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

Based on the information provided, it is considered that the approval of a biodiversity gain plan would not be required before development can be begun and the statutory biodiversity gain planning condition would not apply. This is because the development is considered to meet the conditions of the 'de minimis' exemption, as set out in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. The conditions are that the development does not impact on a priority habitat as specified under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; that the development impacts on less than 25sqm of onsite habitat that has a biodiversity value greater than zero; and that the development impacts on less than 5m of onsite linear habitat.

Background Documents:

P/26/00440/FUL

Documents uploaded to that part of the Council's website that is publicly accessible and specifically relates to the application the subject of this report including all related consultation responses, representations and documents submitted by the applicant in respect of the application.

Notes.

This excludes all documents which are considered to contain exempt information for the purposes of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

Reference to published works is not included.

Case Officer Report Completed:

Officer: Dominika Robbins

Date: 09/04/2026

Agreed by: Katie Herrington

Date: 01/05/2026

Comment: