



26/00318/FUL – University Sports And Athletics Track Wilberforce Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 0EQ

Application details

Report to: Planning Committee

Lead Officer: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

Ward/parish: Newnham

Proposal: Replacement of 12no. existing floodlights and columns serving the athletics track with 12no. new 18m columns with new LED luminaires, with associated works.

Applicant: Chancellor, Masters and Scholars University of Cambridge

Presenting officer: Charlotte Peet

Reason presented to committee:

Third party representations

Member site visit date: N/A

Key issues:

1. Principle of development
2. Green Belt
3. Heritage Impacts
4. Design, layout, scale and landscaping
5. Ecology Impacts

6. Amenity
7. Other Matters

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

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1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The application seeks permission for the replacement of 12no. existing floodlights at heights of 7no. at 8.5m, 3no. at 10.25m, and 2 no. at 16.5m, each with 3-4 lighting heads. The proposal is to replace these with 12no. new 18m columns with new single headed LED luminaires.
- 1.2 The existing floodlight is at the end of its operational life, and the new floodlighting would offer an improvement for the safety, quality and accessibility of training and competitions at the track. The height of floodlight allows improved directionality, and therefore improved uniformity to meet appropriate standards and decreased light spill around the track.

- 1.3 The proposal is supported as an improvement to the existing sporting provision on the site. It is explained that increased height results in visibility of some additional incidences of the floodlighting extending above the existing tree belt, however given that the existing floodlighting is already visible this is modest and it is determined that this would not have a significant adverse impact to the surrounding landscape or character of the area.
- 1.4 It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in a low level of harm to the character and appearance of the West Cambridge Conservation Area and the Emmanuel College Pavillion (grade II listed), however this is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits of improving the operation of the athletics track and improving conditions for residents and protected species.
- 1.5 Officers recommend that the Planning Committee **approve** the application.

Table 2 Consultee summary

Consultee	Object / No objection / No comment	Paragraph Reference
Conservation Officer	Objection	14.5-14.23
County Highways Development Management	No objection	16.5
Ecology Officer	No objection	15.2
Environmental Health	No objection	17.3-17.10
Third Party Representations	17 Objections 16 supportive comments	Addressed in relevant sections of the report
Member Representations	None	N/A
Local Interest Groups and Organisations / Petition	North Newnham Residents Association	Addressed in relevant sections of the report

2. Site description and context

- 2.1 The proposal site comprises the Wilberforce Road Sports Ground. The site comprises the athletics track towards the northeast corner of the site, and hockey pitches which wrap around this to the southwest, both of which are supported by existing floodlighting. The site also comprises a pavilion building, housing a gym and conference space and car and cycle parking. The sports facilities are generally bounded with mature trees, hedgerows and areas of planting which provide visual enclosure and soften views of built structures from the surroundings. Existing floodlighting columns, sports fencing and ancillary sporting infrastructure already contribute to the established character of the site.
- 2.2 The surrounding townscape is varied in character, comprising large university and research buildings to the north and north-west, residential development set within substantial landscaping to the east, and extensive agricultural land and open countryside to the south and west.
- 2.3 The proposal site is located within the Cambridge Green Belt, the boundary of this extends around the north and east of the site up to Stacey Lane and Wilberforce Road. The site is located within an area of Protected Open Space (SPO 52). The proposal site is located adjacent to the West Cambridge Conservation Area, and in close proximity to Emmanuel College Pavillion (grade II listed) and No. 19 Wilberforce Road (building of local interest). The site is bounded by a public right of way at the north (PRoW 39/31) and is a short distance from another to the west (PRoW 39/114).

3. The proposal

- 3.1 The application seeks permission for the replacement of 12no. existing floodlights and columns serving the athletics track with 12no. new 18m columns with new LED luminaires, with associated works.

4. Relevant site history

Reference	Description	Outcome
24/00095/FUL	Replacement of 8no columns and floodlights surrounding Hockey Pitch 1.	Permitted 04.03.2024
17/0473/FUL	The construction of two artificial grass pitches (AGPs), installation of floodlighting to both pitches, replacement fencing to existing pitch,	Permitted 07.06.2017

	extension of balcony on western elevation of the pavilion, insertion of two sets of doors on north elevation of pavilion, replacement of pitched roof with flat roof on scorer's hut, construction of an electrical substation, car and cycle parking and associated landscaping and drainage works.	
07/0939/FUL	Erection of floodlights to serve athletics track and existing and proposed hockey pitches.	Permitted 08.02.2009
C/99/0253	Erection of 8 no. demountable floodlighting columns with luminaires (lights and columns to be taken down each year between 5 May and 5 October).	Permitted 29.10.2002
C/97/1237	Erection of 8no 16m columns with floodlighting.	Refused 14.10.1998
C/92/0305	University sport facilities (including two storey pavilion building, athletics track, 2 no all weather pitches, associated parking and landscaping).	Permitted 11.03.1993

Table 2 Relevant site history

- 4.1 The sports ground was established in the late 1990s, including the pavilion, athletics track and an artificial pitch. In 2007, floodlighting was added to serve the facilities, and in 2017 the two additional hockey pitches were added. Most recently 15-metre-high floodlights were added to Hockey Pitch 1.

5. Policy

5.1 National policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2026

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide 2021

Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) Cycle Infrastructure Design

Circular 11/95 (Conditions, Annex A)

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Environment Act 2021

ODPM Circular 06/2005 – Protected Species

Equalities Act 2010

5.2 Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan 2024-2045 (Regulation 19 Proposed Submission)

5.3 The Proposed Submission Greater Cambridge Local Plan represents the latest stage of preparing a new joint Local Plan for Greater Cambridge. Once it is adopted, it will become the statutory development plan for the Greater Cambridge area, replacing the current (adopted) Local Plans for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District.

5.4 The Proposed Submission Local Plan was published for public consultation (under Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) between 3 August and 25 September 2026.

5.5 In line with Policy DM4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to several factors. The Proposed Submission Local Plan is consistent with policies in the National Planning Policy Framework 2026. Whilst the joint Local Plan is at an advanced stage in the plan making process, the Regulation 19 consultation is yet to be completed.

5.6 Therefore, at this stage, the Proposed Submission Local Plan and its policies can only be afforded limited weight as a material consideration in decision making.

5.7 Submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State is anticipated by the end of December 2026.

5.8 Cambridge Local Plan (2018)

Policy 1: The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Policy 4: The Cambridge Green Belt

Policy 28: Carbon reduction, community energy networks, sustainable design and construction, and water use

Policy 29: Renewable and low carbon energy generation

Policy 34: Light pollution control
Policy 35: Protection of human health from noise and vibration
Policy 36: Air quality, odour and dust
Policy 55: Responding to context
Policy 56: Creating successful places
Policy 57: Designing new buildings
Policy 58: Altering and extending existing buildings
Policy 59: Designing landscape and the public realm
Policy 60: Tall buildings and the skyline in Cambridge
Policy 61: Conservation and enhancement of Cambridge's historic environment
Policy 62: Local heritage assets
Policy 67: Protected Open Space
Policy 69: Protection of sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance
Policy 70: Protection of priority species and habitats
Policy 71: Trees
Policy 73: Community, sports and leisure facilities
Policy 80: Supporting sustainable access to development
Policy 82: Parking management

5.9 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020

5.10 Other guidance

Biodiversity Checklist for Land Use Planners in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (2001).

Buildings of Local Interest (2005)

Cambridgeshire Design Guide For Streets and Public Realm (2007)

5.11 Area Guidelines

West Cambridge Conservation Area Appraisal (2011)

6. Consultations

Publicity

Neighbour letters – Y

Site Notice – Y

Conservation Officer- Object

- 6.1 The additional information provides convincing justification for the 18m height of the columns. The conservation impacts and policy considerations as previously outlined remain relevant however. The harm should therefore be balanced against the benefits of the proposal in line with local and national policy.

County Highways Development Management - No Objection

- 6.2 No significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal should it gain benefit of Planning Permission.

Ecology Officer- No Objection

- 6.3 The proposal represents a substantial improvement over baseline conditions due to a marked reduction in horizontal and vertical spill; perimeter levels reducing to approximately 1 lux or lower, which is generally consistent with maintaining dark corridors where ecological receptors may be present and clear containment of light within the operational footprint.
- 6.4 Recommended condition:
- Compliance with mitigation measures

Environmental Health- No Objection

- 6.5 The development proposed is acceptable subject to the imposition of the condition(s)/informative(s) outlined below.
- Floodlighting compliance
 - Hours of use
 - Construction/ demolition hours

7. Third party representations

- 7.1 34 representations have been received, 15 in support, 19 in objection.
- 7.2 Those in objection have raised the following issues:
- Site history
 - Character, appearance and scale
 - Heritage impacts

- Residential amenity impact (light pollution)
- Highway safety
- Car parking and parking stress
- Loss of biodiversity

7.3 Those in support have given the following reasons:

- Improved conditions at sports ground
- Meeting appropriate track standards
- Improved energy efficiency
- Improve safety of track
- Reduce safeguarding issues
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Encourage continued public access

7.4 The above representations are a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the representations are available on the Council's website.

8. Member Representations

8.1 The Newnham County Councillor objects to the application, the main issues can be summarised as follows:

- Light pollution
- Biodiversity
- Design
- Amenity
- Consultation

9. Local Groups / Petition

9.1 **North Newnham Neighbourhood Forum** is not supportive of the application in its current form; they raise the following matters:

- Supportive of the provision of good sporting facilities
- Adverse impacts to the character of the area
- Impact to Conservation Area
- Visible lighting spill/ glare
- Impacts to human health
- Adverse impacts to residential amenity
- Requesting lighting shield
- Impacts to biodiversity
- Request biodiversity net gain

10. Planning background

- 10.1 The application site has operation as a sporting facility since the late 1990s and has expanded in recent years to create additional hockey pitches to meet the previous need in the city. The site has been supported by floodlight to allow operation to continue in darker months for several years (ref. 07/0939/FUL), most recently 8no. 15 metre columns were supported on the southern hockey pitch (ref. 24/00095/FUL).

11. Assessment

- 11.1 From the consultation responses and representations received and from an inspection of the site and the surroundings, the key issues are:
- Principle of development (including green belt)
 - Design, layout, scale and landscaping
 - Heritage assets
 - Carbon reduction and sustainable design
 - Biodiversity
 - Highway safety and transport impacts
 - Amenity
 - Third party representations
 - Other matters
 - Planning balance
 - Recommendation
 - Planning conditions

12. Principle of Development

- 12.1 Policy 73 supports new or enhanced community, sports or leisure facilities providing that (a) the range, quality and accessibility of facilities are improved; (b) there is a local need for the facilities; and (c) the facility is in close proximity to the people it serves.
- 12.2 The proposal relates to the athletics track which forms part of the Wilberforce Road University Sports Ground. The athletics track forms part of the sporting provision on the site, there are also three hockey pitches and a pavilion hosting a gym, sports hall and other facilities. The athletics track forms an 8-lane track, used by the University Athletics Club, Cambridge and Coleridge Athletics Club and residents of the city and wider area. There is existing floodlighting coverage on the site, serving both the hockey pitches and the athletics track.
- 12.3 The athletics track relies on floodlighting in the darker months to ensure that users can continue to train and competitions can take place year-

round. The supporting information submitted with the application explains that the existing floodlighting is now approaching 15 years of service, which is the end of its operational life. As such, the applicant is facing difficulty with the system as failures are becoming more frequent and there are difficulties sourcing replacement parts. The result is that the track does not current meet appropriate standards for safe and accessible operation, and the use of the track and in-field areas is being limited at darker times of the year.

- 12.4 The proposal seeks replace the 12no. existing flood lighting columns that line the outer edge of the athletics track on the site. The proposed floodlighting would offer replacement columns at 18 metres tall with LED lighting. The increased height and improved lighting system enables light to be directed vertically which has the benefit of decreasing necessary lux levels, improving uniformity of lighting levels across the track and infield area.
- 12.5 As part of the application process, Officers sought information of the lighting levels from lower floodlighting which the applicant considered. It was however demonstrated that the lower height would not enable the appropriate directionality to reach the appropriate standards.
- 12.6 The proposed improvements to lighting conditions ensure that the track and infield can be used year-round by members of the public and local athletics groups in a safe and accessible manner. The current situation is not sufficient to allow the facility to be used at its full potential as the uniformity of lighting levels is poor to restrict use of the infield and track areas in low lighting conditions. The varied heights of the existing columns and the angle of the lighting heads also result in excess glare to users of the facility, meaning that the track cannot meet the appropriate club standards for use.
- 12.7 The athletics track is an important and unique facility within the city, that serves local people within the city and beyond. Several representations have been received in support of the application to explain the importance of good lighting to allow training for various sports to take place including pole vault, high jump and throwing events and the safety of club members. The proposal is considered to enhance quality, useability and safety of this at the benefit to the local users.
- 12.8 The principle of the development is therefore acceptable and in accordance with Policy 73 of the Local Plan (2018).
- 12.9 **Protected Open Space**

- 12.10 The site comprises an area of Protected Open Space (SPO 52). The Open Space and Recreation Strategy (2011) outlines that the site is important for both its environmental and recreational quality.
- 12.11 As the proposal would replace existing floodlights on the site, the proposal would not reduce the quantum nor alter the function of the open space. Given this, the proposal would not lead to harm to the environmental or recreational importance of the site.
- 12.12 The proposal is therefore compliant with Policy 67 of the Local Plan (2018).
- 12.13 **Green Belt**
- 12.14 Policy 4 of Cambridge Local Plan (2018) outlines that new development in the Green Belt will only be approved in line with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 12.15 Chapter 13 of the NPPF (2026) introduces Green Belt policy by stating that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 12.16 Policy GB2 provides the purposes of the Green Belt: a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 12.17 Policy GB6 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities 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.
- 12.18 Policy GB7 outlines that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the listed exceptions applies. The exception within Paragraph GB71(f(iv)) is provision for appropriate facilities, including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation [...] provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes.

- 12.19 The proposed floodlighting would serve an outdoor sporting facility, and therefore is considered to fall within this criteria, however Officers must consider the impact to the openness and purposes of the Green Belt as guided by the policy.
- 12.20 The NPPG guides that when considering openness, considerations should be given to both spatial and visual aspects of openness, the duration of the development and degree of activity likely to be generated.
- 12.21 Openness
- 12.22 The proposal seeks to replace the 12no. existing flood lighting columns that line the outer edge of the athletics track on the site. The existing columns vary in height and include 7no. of 8.5m, 3no. of 10.25m, and 2 no. of 16.5m, each contains a column with between 3-4 lighting heads on each to direct light in various directions around the track. The proposed replacement lighting seeks to replace these columns with new columns that would measure a height of 18m would contain 1no. lighting head that would be directed downwards to the floor.
- 12.23 The proposed floodlight would be located around the existing athletics track, which is located towards the northeast corner of the existing sporting ground. The track is surrounding on the south and west boundaries by the 3no. existing floodlit hockey pitches, the pavilion building and the associated car parking. The northeast boundaries abut landscaped areas within the site, comprising verdant areas of trees and ponds. Beyond this, the site is located at western edge of the city, with the established settle wrapping around the north and east of the site, and the open countryside beyond the south and west boundaries.
- 12.24 The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (2021) identifies the site within Parcel HC9 (Figure 1), and outlines that the land in this area has some degree of containment by urban development, and that the urban edge to the west is also fairly well-treed, which prevents the urban area from dominating views. The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment Review (2026) considers the parcels in light of changes to the NPPF (2024). The review focuses on the consideration of Grey Belt, and considers sites against NPPF (2024) purpose D as a crucial part of local context. The review sets out that the site makes a strong contribution to purpose D and a total release from Green Belt designation would result in a high level of harm.



Figure 1 – Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment Parcel HC9

- 12.25 The site is experienced from the footpath/ cycleway (PRoW 39/31) and footpath to the south (PRoW 39/114). The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) provides visualisations to demonstrate the visibility of the proposal from various viewpoints around the site.
- 12.26 The LVIA compares the existing situation with the proposed replacement floodlighting columns from the key views around the site. The existing view from the northeast (Wilberforce Road), northwest (PRoW 39/31), west (PRoW 39/114) already contains a number of floodlighting columns associated with the established sporting use of the site. The proposed development would replace the existing floodlighting infrastructure and would not introduce a substantially greater number of columns, nor significantly increase their prominence within the wider landscape. It is acknowledged from the northeastern view, there would be a modest increase in the visible projections above the tree line from the sporting columns, however this is considered to be a modest change that would not compromise the openness of the Green Belt in this location. The proposed floodlighting comprise slender vertical features with less lighting heads than the existing equipment, viewed within the context of the existing sporting infrastructure and are partially screened by mature trees and hedgerow they are considered to appear relatively recessive and unobtrusive within the Green Belt. Whilst representations have raised concerns about lighting impact to the Green Belt, the lighting spill would decrease given the angle of the lighting heads, and therefore this does not diminish the openness of the Green Belt.
- 12.27 The replaced columns would remain visible within the landscape, however the submitted information indicates that the proposal would not introduce a

substantially greater number of columns, nor significantly increase their prominence within the wider landscape. Whilst, the height of the columns is increased, the lighting heads are reduced, and therefore overall the proposal is considered to maintain the visual and spatial aspects of the openness of the Green Belt are preserved.

- 12.28 Concern has been raised that the proposed floodlighting would urbanise the Green Belt and harm its rural character. Officers are satisfied that the proposed lighting would increase the directionality and direct illumination onto the playing areas and minimise light spill beyond the site.
- 12.29 Whilst the site is located within the Green Belt, it forms part of an established sports facility where floodlighting already exists. The proposal would not introduce lighting into an otherwise unlit location, but would extend an existing lighting arrangement. The submitted information demonstrates that lighting impacts can be appropriately controlled through design and would not result in unacceptable glare, sky glow or light trespass into the surrounding countryside and Green Belt.

The proposal would not increase traffic movements to the site, given that the floodlighting is not intended to increase competitions but just enhance the existing training operations.

12.30 Purposes of the Green Belt

- 12.31 The wider site has been assessed under the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (2021) (GCGBA) and the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment supplementary review (2026). The original assessment seeks to identify the variations in the openness and the extent to which land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt. This assessment uses this to inform where the variations in the potential harm to the purposes of the green belt of releasing land within the designation. The assessment reviews allocated sites within the green belt and assess them against Cambridge Purposes 1 (Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre), 2 (Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting) and 3 (Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city). The purposes hold similarities to the NPPF purposes, the review expands on how each one can be considered in a local context.
- 12.32 In regard to Purpose 1, the GCGBA outlines that the site makes a relatively significant contribution to this purpose due to its location at the city edge. In regard to Purpose 2, the GCGBA identifies that although the land has a use (University Sports Ground) which weakens its rural character, it

contains some areas of open land and woodland and contributes to the open and green landscape setting experienced in proximity to the city edge. The contribution to purpose 3 is considered to be relatively limited due to the M11 as a distinct separating feature.

- 12.33 In considering the above assessment the proposal is not considered to conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt. The proposed floodlight replaces existing columns on the site as part of the infrastructure supporting the sporting field and would not extend the built footprint of the sports facility. As such, the proposal is not considered to conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 12.34 The proposal is considered to fall with exception GB7(1(f(iv))) and would not be considered to constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The proposal is compliant with Policy 4 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and Policies GB2, GB6 and GB7 of the NPPF (2026).

13. Design, layout, scale and landscaping

- 13.1 The proposal site comprises the Wilberforce Road Sports Ground. The surrounding townscape is varied in character, comprising large university and research buildings to the north and north-west, residential development set within substantial landscaping to the east, and extensive agricultural land and open countryside to the south and west. The proposal site forms part of the western edge of the site, and the floodlights would be visible as part of the skyline within this setting.
- 13.2 The proposal seeks to replace the 12no. existing flood lighting columns that line the outer edge of the athletics track on the site.
- 13.3 It is noted that the application has several representations raising concerns about the visual impact of the proposal on the character of the area, both due to the increased height and illumination. North Newnham Neighbourhood Association share this concern.
- 13.4 The application is supported by a LVIA which provides indicative visualisations of the proposal from various viewpoints around the site.
- 13.5 Viewpoint 1 (Wilberforce Road) shows the visualisation where the proposal is most highly perceived. The image demonstrates that the existing character from this viewpoint is informed by existing sporting facilities both within the foreground of the image (Emmanuel College Playing Fields, and

Cambridge Lawn Tennis Club beyond) and in the distance where the existing floodlighting infrastructure is visible above the existing tree line. The wider setting is also influenced by a range of urban features, including residential development along Wilberforce Road including parked vehicles and highway lighting. The proposed floodlighting would be visible above the existing tree line within the context of the existing sports facility infrastructure. Whilst the increased height of the columns would introduce some additional punctuations into the skyline above the trees, these are slender and relatively subtle within this context. The proposed columns would not be considered to be dominant within this setting nor to materially alter the established character of the area.

- 13.6 A concern has been raised that the proposed floodlighting columns would dwarf the pavilion building and surrounding development. Officers acknowledge that the columns would be taller than the pavilion and would be visible above the surrounding vegetation. However, the submitted visualisations demonstrate that the columns are slender structures occupying a limited proportion of the overall view and are seen within the context of existing floodlighting infrastructure and sports facilities. Whilst the proposed columns would be taller in scale than the pavilion building, they would be viewed at a significant distance from it and would not dominate or overwhelm the building within the wider street scene.
- 13.7 The floodlight would also be visible from Harcamlow Way and viewpoints to the west of the sports ground (Viewpoints 5, 7-11). The views along Harcamlow Way are dominated by the verdant character which defines the western edge of the city, although it is clear from the viewpoints that existing sporting infrastructure is already visible above the tree line here. In addition, upon visiting the site, it was clear that at this point that although this is the edge of the city the experience from Harcamlow Way is informed by the existing development with the West Cambridge education site. The visualisations show that between the existing floodlight columns, some of the new columns would be visible as additional structures above the tree line, however they do not appear significantly taller or more intrusive than the existing columns.
- 13.8 The longer views to the west of the site (Viewpoint 11), show that the floodlights would increase the number of visible columns but this would be read as part of the existing sports complex which is already visible. Whilst the proposals would result in a modest increase in the presence of vertical structures on the skyline, the columns would remain relatively slender in appearance and would be viewed at a considerable distance. Existing vegetation, the intervening field, and the presence of other built and vertical features within the wider view reduce their prominence. Consequently,

although the development would give rise to a minor change to the view, the additional floodlighting columns would not appear unduly prominent, would not materially alter the character of the landscape, and would not result in significant visual harm.

- 13.9 In this part of the city, built form is generally fairly low in height owing predominantly to the residential nature of much of the built form. The educational buildings associated with the university colleges do tend to rise above these domestic forms, however are generally maintained below the tree line of the city. The University Library is the tallest building within this part of the city and therefore tends to be the primary feature within the skyline from long range views. From views around the proposal site the floodlights at the sports ground do extend above the treeline, these do not protrude to the same extent as the library and are less visible from longer range but do form part of the skyline in this location. The proposed floodlight is not considered to adversely impact the character of the skyline, as the additional columns would appear as a continuation of the existing group of lighting structures rather than as isolated or incongruous features. The columns are slender in form and are not considered to dominate or compete with other important skyline features including the University Library. It is therefore considered that the proposal would preserve the overall character of the skyline.
- 13.10 In terms of lighting impacts, Officers are satisfied that the lighting has been designed to direct illumination towards the playing areas and that the scheme would not result in unacceptable levels of glare, light spill or sky glow. The North Newnham Neighbourhood Forum recognise the improvement in angling light to reduce light spill, but remain concerned about the potential for lateral glare. Residents also raise concerns about the impacts of additional lighting in a fairly low lighting setting.
- 13.11 The proposed floodlights incorporate flat-style optics and an internal louvre system specifically designed to shield the LED light source and reduce obtrusive light. The luminaires direct illumination towards the athletics track and infield whilst limiting light emitted outwards. The lighting would be a feature above the tree line, however the proposal would not materially change the prevailing character of the surrounding residential area and open countryside given the existing context of sporting infrastructure.
- 13.12 Concerns have been raised by residents that the submitted visualisations were prepared during summer conditions when vegetation is in leaf and therefore may underrepresent the visibility of the floodlighting columns during winter months.

- 13.13 Officers acknowledge that seasonal variations in vegetation cover can influence the visibility of development. However, the purpose of the submitted visualisations is not solely to demonstrate screening by vegetation, but to illustrate the scale, height and appearance of the proposed floodlighting columns within the wider landscape and townscape context. The visualisations provide a reasonable and representative indication of how the development would appear from identified viewpoints.
- 13.14 Whilst visibility may increase to some degree during winter months as vegetation cover is reduced, the proposed columns would continue to be experienced in the context of the existing sports facilities, existing floodlighting infrastructure and surrounding built form. Officers are satisfied that seasonal changes would not materially alter the conclusions of the visual assessment or result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area, visual amenity or the Green Belt.
- 13.15 Overall, the proposed development is a high-quality design that would contribute positively to its surroundings and be appropriately landscaped. The proposal is compliant with policies 8, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

14. Heritage assets

- 14.1 The application site is located adjacent to the West Cambridge Conservation Area. The application is within the setting of the Emmanuel College Sports Pavilion (grade II listed building).
- 14.2 The West Cambridge Conservation Area abuts the Central Conservation and covers the western portion of the city. The West Cambridge Conservation Area comprises predominantly residential and educational uses, is noted within the Conservation Appraisal (2011) that the area is characterised by spacious residential streets, intertwined larger university buildings and a series of green, open spaces. It is considered to be distinct from the central area of the city due to a less built-up, semi-rural character.
- 14.3 The Appraisal (2011) notes that The University Sports Ground is an important recreational and environmental space as well as being part of the green corridor into the city. It is just outside the Conservation Area boundary, and although it is part of the network of College playing fields it differs from some of these spaces given that it has been development for formalised pitches and track space rather than undeveloped, open playing fields.

- 14.4 The Appraisal (2011) highlights positive views east and south from the cycleway/ footpath to the north of the site. The Conservation Officer highlights that views exist towards and over the site from the University Library Tower (grade II listed) and Emmanuel College Sport Pavillion (grade II listed).
- 14.5 The Conservation Officer has been formally consulted on the application, and objects to the application. The Conservation Officer accepts the justification for the proposal, however, indicates that harm would result to the setting and significance of the West Cambridge Conservation Area, University Library and Emmanuel College Pavilion. They outline that the harm would be at the lower end of less-than-substantial harm and therefore should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 14.6 It is noted that the Conservation Officer gave their comments prior to the NPPF (2026) update, and therefore includes an indication of 'less-than-substantial' harm. This category of harm has been removed from the NPPF and harm would now be categorised as 'harm' and 'substantial harm'. Officers are comfortable that the harm outlined would not amount to substantial harm and would be harm at a lower level.
- 14.7 The Conservation Officer outlines that the columns would be visible over the treeline from Wilberforce Road, from fields to the west, and from the identified important CA views on Harcamlow Way. They consider that the increased scale in comparison to the existing columns would be clearly perceptible, adding a concentrated cluster of prominent and incongruous features to the skyline. They outline that this is considered harmful to the appreciation of the conservation area, also detracting from the prominence of the University Library tower and low-rise open setting of the Emmanuel Pavilion.
- 14.8 Several third-party representations raise concerns about the impact from the proposal on the Conservation Area, particularly taking account of views around the area as highlighted in the appraisal.
- 14.9 As described, the significance of the West Cambridge Conservation Area, as relevant to this application, relates mainly to the landscape-based character, network of open spaces and low residential and educational built forms. In regard to the Conservation Area, the Conservation Officer outlines that the appreciation of the Conservation Area from views from Wilberforce Road, from fields to the west, and from the identified important CA views on Harcamlow Way would be impacted due to the perceptible and incongruous features within the skyline.

- 14.10 From Wilberforce Road (Viewpoint 1), it is acknowledged that the proposed floodlighting would be visible over the existing treeline and beyond the Emmanuel College Pavillion. Whilst, the existing floodlighting is partially visible already, the additional height of the columns means that there are increased projections into the skyline. Whilst, the lighting spill would be lower than the existing columns, the increased projections do mean that there would be increased lighting points. It is considered that the increased incidences of floodlighting extending above the tree line would partially detract from the prominence of the verdant features within this part of the Conservation Area and draw the eye above the Pavillion. Whilst, the proposal would increase these features, there is an existing character of sporting paraphernalia both on the site and within the surrounding area that serve the open spaces at the western edge of the city (e.g. Cambridge Lawn Tennis Club) and therefore the harm would be at the low end of the spectrum.
- 14.11 From Harcamlow Way (Viewpoints 5 and 7), there would be a perceptible change arising from the proposed floodlighting. However, the degree of change would be modest, given that existing floodlighting columns are already a visible component of views on this approach to the city. The visualisations demonstrate that the substantial belt of mature trees and vegetation would continue to provide an effective landscape backdrop, ensuring that the important views towards Cambridge retain their predominantly green and semi-rural character. While the proposed development would result in a small increase in the number of slender columns visible within the view, these structures are lightweight in appearance and are clearly associated with the established sporting uses of the site. As explained, the lighting levels are lower than the existing features and therefore do not substantially alter the character from this viewpoint given the existing lighting points. The floodlights would not introduce an overtly urbanising, commercial or overdeveloped character. Consequently, the effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area from these viewpoints is considered to give rise to very minor harm at the lower end of the spectrum.
- 14.12 The Conservation Officer also outlines that the proposal would detract from the prominence of the University Library tower and low-rise open setting of the Emmanuel Pavilion. In relation to the University Library Tower, this landmark is situated approximately 0.5 miles to the east of the application site and is experienced as a distinctive feature within wider views approaching Cambridge from the west. Whilst the proposed floodlighting columns would introduce additional vertical elements into the view, they would be read in the foreground as part of the established sporting infrastructure associated with the Wilberforce Road sports grounds. Their

slender profile and functional appearance ensure that they would not compete with, obscure or diminish the visual prominence of the Library Tower, which would continue to be perceived as the dominant landmark within the skyline.

- 14.13 No. 19 Wilberforce Road is a building of local interest, the Conservation Officer has not identified harm to the non-designated asset. Officers agree with this assessment, the building is a residential dwelling to the eastern side of Wilberforce Road. It benefits from mature screening and is set back from the road as to maintain a visual separation from the proposal site, the proposed floodlights are not considered to adversely impact the special interest of the building.
- 14.14 The proposal would therefore result in a low level of harm to the West Cambridge Conservation Area and the Emmanuel College Pavillion.
- 14.15 Paragraph 4 of Policy HE6 of the NPPF (2026) outlines that where a development proposal will lead to harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed. Paragraph 1 of Policy HE6 emphasises that substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and the desire to protect these assets is emphasised within Paragraphs 66 and 72 of the Listed Building and Conservation Area Act 1990. Policy HE9 of the NPPF states that development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible. They should also consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.
- 14.16 *Improving Use Conditions*
- 14.17 The proposal relates to the Wilberforce Road Sports Ground, which forms a unique and important component of sporting provision within Cambridge and the wider region. The facility accommodates the only athletics track within the district and serves as a training and competition venue for both the Cambridge University Athletics Club and Cambridge and Coleridge Athletics Club. The track and infield are also available to members of the public through membership arrangements and track card access, providing an important community sporting resource.

- 14.18 The existing floodlighting installation is now approaching 15 years of service and is nearing the end of its operational life. As a consequence, failures are becoming increasingly frequent and replacement parts are becoming more difficult to source. In addition, the current lighting system provides poor uniformity across the track and particularly within the infield area, limiting its effective use during the darker months of the year. The existing installation no longer provides lighting to an appropriate standard for safe and accessible operation, restricting the use of both the track and infield during periods of limited daylight. There is therefore a clear need to replace the existing floodlighting to ensure the continued operation of this important facility.
- 14.19 The proposed floodlighting would enable the athletics track and infield to achieve their full operational potential, supporting year-round, safe and accessible use by both organised clubs and members of the public. The scheme would improve lighting uniformity whilst reducing overall illuminance levels and light spill. This would allow the facility to be used more effectively during the winter months and would enable compliance with England Athletics Class III TrackMark lighting requirements for training and recreational use. Whilst it is acknowledged that the increased height of the proposed columns would give rise to a degree of heritage impact, as identified above, the submitted technical information demonstrates that the additional height is necessary to direct light more effectively onto the track surface. This approach reduces glare, minimises light spill beyond the sports ground and enables the required lighting standards to be achieved using lower overall lux levels.
- 14.20 *Reduced Lighting Spill*
- 14.21 The supporting technical information demonstrates that the proposal would significantly reduce both illuminance levels across the track and light spill beyond the sports ground, resulting in benefits for neighbouring residents and the surrounding verdant landscape. The existing athletics floodlighting typically achieves illuminance levels of between 200 and 400 lux, with localised maximum values exceeding 600 lux along the northern side of the track. Light spill also extends beyond the track perimeter, with contour levels of 200, 100 and 50 lux occurring around the edges of the facility. By comparison, the proposed installation would provide an average illuminance of approximately 120 lux across the track, with a maintained minimum of 100 lux. Light spill beyond the track would be substantially reduced, generally remaining below 20 lux and reducing to between 1 lux and close to 0 lux across many surrounding areas. The lighting would therefore be more precisely focused on the intended area of use, reducing

visual disturbance, limiting unnecessary spill illumination and improving conditions for neighbouring residents and the wider landscape setting.

- 14.22 In accordance with Policy HE6 and HE9 of the NPPF, the identified low level of harm to the significance of the West Cambridge Conservation Area and the Emmanuel College Sports Ground Pavilion must be balanced against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the benefits are considered to carry moderate weight. The proposal would secure the continued operation of an important sporting facility through the replacement of floodlighting that is nearing the end of its operational life; improve the safety, accessibility and usability of the athletics track and infield throughout the year; enable compliance with recognised athletics lighting standards; and support continued community and university use of the district's only athletics track.
- 14.23 *Improved Sustainability and Amenity*
- 14.24 In addition, the scheme would deliver environmental and amenity benefits through reduced overall illuminance levels, significantly improved lighting uniformity, reduced glare, greater energy efficiency and a substantial reduction in light spill to surrounding residential properties and verdant areas. The proposal would utilise LED luminaires which would use less than a third of the power of metal halide for equivalent light output, this is supported as enabling energy efficiency.
- 14.25 Taking these benefits together, it is considered that the identified low level of harm is clearly outweighed by the public benefits arising from the proposal and, as such, the development accords with the heritage objectives of the NPPF.
- 14.26 The Conservation Officer indicates that they have considered some of the site history as part of the assessment. The Conservation Officer refers to a planning application refused in 1997 for eight 16m lighting columns and suggests that the issues identified at that time remain relevant. Whilst the issues surrounding visual, heritage and skyline impact remain considerations, the site and its surroundings have changed significantly over the intervening 28 years and therefore the 1997 decision can only be afforded limited weight in the assessment of the current proposal.
- 14.27 The application should be considered using the up-to-date development plan and NPPF (2026), and should take note of the current circumstances of the site, rather than being assessed using historic assessments of significance and impact. As such, whilst the decision is noted, it does not

alter or outweigh the assessment weighed in favour of the public benefits of the application.

- 14.28 The proposal is compliant with the provisions of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, the NPPF and policy 61 and 62 of the Local Plan.

15. Biodiversity

- 15.1 The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Lighting Spill Assessment. The PEA report includes an ecological assessment of the site, habitats and protected species and consideration of nearby statutory and non-statutory sites. The report provides recommendations on mitigations required to protect the species from adverse impacts. The lighting spill assessment shows compares the spill contours from the existing and proposed lighting scheme.
- 15.2 The application has been subject to formal consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer who raises no objection to the proposal. The Officer outlines that the site is dominated by hardstanding, amenity grassland and artificial sports surfaces, with boundary trees and hedgerows providing the principal ecological features of value.
- 15.3 They recognise that the site is within the Core Sustenance Zone (CSZ) of the Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*). They also note the site is located within close proximity to non-statutory designated including Adams Road Bird Sanctuary (ARBS).
- 15.4 They outline that regarding bats the site has low bat roost potential as bat activity is associated primarily with boundary vegetation and the site is already subject to artificial lighting. They outline that the proposed scheme would offer a substantial ecological improvement over baseline as there would be: a marked reduction in horizontal and vertical spill; perimeter levels reducing to approximately 1 lux or lower, which is generally consistent with maintaining dark corridors where ecological receptors may be present and clear containment of light within the operational footprint. Given this, the proposal would not adversely impact bats or other protected species on or around the site.
- 15.5 It is noted that some of the representations received, including that from the Newnham County Councillor and North Newnham Neighbourhood Forum, raise concerns about impacts to biodiversity due to the potential for additional lighting pollution. The Ecology Officer explains that the proposal would offer an ecological improvement due to the reduction in lighting spill

and reduction of lux levels at the perimeter of the track and good lighting containment. It is noted the PEA gives recommendations on lighting design that have been incorporated into the proposal design to ensure appropriate lighting for bats and other protected species. Given this, the proposal would not adversely impact biodiversity on or around the site.

- 15.6 The representations received have raised concerns about the impact from the light on migrating birds relating to the ARBS and insects within the surroundings. Officers have referred to the Ecology Officer to consider these points. The Officer explains that the Light Spill Assessment shows clear containment of light within the athletics track, with perimeter levels at 1 lux or lower. The Adams Road Bird Sanctuary lies outside the illuminated envelope and no light spill reaches the sanctuary at levels known to affect bird behaviour, migration, or roosting. The site is already subject to significant artificial lighting from existing columns, however the proposal reduces horizontal and vertical spill compared with baseline. They outline that migratory birds are not sensitive to low-level, distant, shielded sports lighting. Impacts arise from skyglow, upward spill, or direct illumination of habitat—none of which occur here.
- 15.7 In regard to insects, the Ecology Officer outlines that the proposed luminaires are full cut-off LED fittings that direct light downwards onto the athletics track, rather than allowing light to spill into the surrounding habitats. The assessment shows that light levels around the perimeter reduce to around 1 lux or less, which is very low and means there is little light reaching areas where insects are likely to be present. The site is already illuminated by the existing floodlights, and the proposed scheme reduces light spill into the surrounding vegetation. No semi-natural habitats are being newly illuminated.
- 15.8 Public comments also suggest that based on the submitted PEA additional information should be provided. It is acknowledged that the PEA mentions that additional surveys could be undertaken, however the Ecology Officer suggests that these are not necessary. The assessment identifies the on-site trees as having low bat roost potential, and importantly no trees or potential roost features are being affected by the proposal. The main ecological consideration is the potential effect of the replacement lighting on commuting and foraging bats along the site boundaries.
- 15.9 The Ecology Officer recommends a condition be attached to secure mitigation measures within the submitted PEA, this is reasonable to ensure the proposal would deliver the betterment in lighting conditions. No conditions are recommended for biodiversity net gain, given that the development would fall below the de minimis threshold. The North

Newnham Neighbourhood Forum question if the proposal would meet biodiversity requirements. Given the site would replace existing floodlighting and would directly impact less than 25 sqm of on-site habitat or 5 metres of linear habitat it would be exempt from this requirement.

- 15.10 In consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, subject to an appropriate condition, officers are satisfied that the proposed development complies with policies 69 and 70 of the Local Plan, the Biodiversity SPD 2022, the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and 06/2005 Circular advice.

16. Highway safety and transport impacts

- 16.1 The information submitted within the Design and Access Statement outlines that there would be no access alterations as part of the proposal. The existing access to the athletics track would continue to be utilised, and no significant transport uplift is expected as part of the proposal.
- 16.2 It is noted that concern has been raised that the proposed floodlighting would facilitate an increase in the frequency and scale of athletics events, leading to additional traffic and parking pressures within the surrounding area. However, the information submitted in support of the application indicates that the proposal is intended to improve the quality of lighting provision at the existing facility and would not result in an increase in training activities, competitions or the overall use of the site.
- 16.3 On this basis, officers have no evidence to conclude that the proposal would generate a material increase in vehicle movements, parking demand or associated highway impacts. It would not be reasonable to require a Travel and Event Management Plan as requested within the third party representations given this.
- 16.4 As existing, cycle and car parking provision is located on the site. The car parking includes five accessible spaces which have level access across the site to the athletics track. The cycle parking is located close to the site entrance and is covered with level access to the facility. The site is within a highly sustainable location, with direct access to the city cycle network, including PRoW 39/31 to the north and the Adams Road cycleway to the east. This arrangement would continue to benefit the site.
- 16.5 The application has been subject to formal consultation with Cambridgeshire County Council's Local Highways Authority who raise no objection to the proposal. Officers agree with the assessment made by the

Highways Authority, noting that the proposal would not alter existing access arrangements it is not considered to adversely impact Highway Safety.

- 16.6 The proposal accords with the objectives of Policy 80 of the Local Plan and is compliant with NPPF advice.

17. Amenity

Neighbouring properties

- 17.1 The application site sits in close proximity to residential properties to the northwest (Clerk Maxwell Road, Perry Court) and east (Wilberforce Road, Adams Road) and there are student accommodation buildings to the southeast (Hinsley Lane). These receptors are located approximately 80, 100 and 30 metres respectively from the proposed flood lighting locations.
- 17.2 The application is submitted with Lighting Impact Assessment (LIA) and Lighting Spill Assessment (LSA). The LIA explains that the proposed SITECO FL11 LED Floodlight System uses flat style optics and an internal louvre system to shield the optics. The lighting is designed with a dimming facility and zones of light to allow lower light levels when the standard of play does not require full illumination. The report explains that the mounting height of 18m to ensure that the floodlight aperture will remain horizontal.
- 17.3 The Council's Environmental Health Team have assessed the application. They explain that when considering lighting impacts their primary concern is the protection of nearby residential receptors. The potential impacts are measured as lux levels on the vertical plane and the thresholds to be achieved are presented in Table 3 of 'The Reduction of Obtrusive Light' – GN01/21 (2021). The Officer has considered the application using the guidance for Environmental Zone 2 and outlines that the proposal would result in lux levels below the pre-curfew lighting limit of 5 lux at the vertical plane at each receptor point.
- 17.4 The Environmental Health Officer highlights that the lighting spill would be improved as part of the proposals, with the model outputs on the vertical plane reducing as part of the proposal. Given the betterment that would result to lighting spill, the Environmental Health Officer supports the application.
- 17.5 Officers agree with the assessment. The Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2020) outlines that due to the potential

adverse impacts of artificial lighting, it must be designed to reduce impacts in accordance with the 2021 guidance. This includes lighting being directed downwards; designed to reduce spill; meet the minimum standard rather than 'overlight' and be most efficient. The submitted information explains that the lighting has been designed to meet the guidance as it would have horizontal directionality, minimal spill and designed with highly efficiency LED optics.

- 17.6 As part of the representations received, several comments from local residents and one from the County Councillor for Newnham and North Newnham Neighbourhood Forum have been submitted explaining the concern regarding amenity impacts from the proposed floodlighting. They outline that their properties have direct views of the floodlights and are concerned that the increase in height will worsen the impacts. They suggest the current lighting is sufficient and the increased height is not necessary. As has been outlined above, the increase in height allows greater directionality and therefore reduced lighting spill to residential occupiers meaning that the lux levels meeting the homes would be below the levels set out in the 2021 guidance. It is acknowledged that the height of the floodlights would render the floodlights visible, however, given the low level of luminance reaching the properties this is not considered to result in environmental harm. The floodlighting has been well designed to avoid lighting pollution including sky glare and spill to residents.
- 17.7 It is noted that some of the representations request that physical hoods be attached to the lighting heads, and asymmetric lenses be used to projecting lighting down. The Newnham County Councillor highlight the Lawns Tennis Club who utilise physical barriers on the lights. The lighting is designed with an internal louvre system which maintains a flat optical system providing uniform illuminance over the pitch whilst cutting off obtrusive light towards properties. The lighting has been designed with high directionality to avoid excessive light spill. The features differ from those requested, however are well designed to mitigate impacts to residential occupiers.
- 17.8 The Officer requests conditions relating to the lighting levels regarding operating hours of floodlighting and compliance with the LIA and LSA. These are considered reasonable in order to protect the surrounding residential receptors from lighting spill. One representation requests a condition to avoid lighting pointing towards residents, whilst the wording of the condition requested would not meet the tests, the compliance condition recommended by the Environmental Health Officer would be sufficient to ensure residents would not be faced with harmful lighting.

- 17.9 A condition has been requested relating to operating hours of the lighting, the Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition to limit the hours to be consistent with the original approval (ref. 07/0939/FUL) and this is considered reasonable to secure appropriate limitations.
- 17.10 A condition has also been requested to ensure the technical specifications of the luminaires are strictly controlled. It is considered reasonable to secure the specifications of the lighting proposed through a condition. This would secure the ability for the lighting to be dimmed, and for only the zone being utilised to be illuminated.
- 17.11 One representation requests that a condition be added to assess the actually lighting spill post installation. This is not considered necessary given that the lighting levels are secured through the compliance conditions recommended by the Environmental Health Officer.

Construction impacts

- 17.12 The Council's Environmental Health Team have assessed the application and recommended a condition to control construction and delivery hours, this is considered reasonable given the proximity to residential receptors.
- 17.13 It is noted that the Newnham County Councillor and residents have raised concerns about increase in noise levels. The proposal is not anticipated to substantially increase noise levels, the sports track is already in operation at this time, the new lighting would simply replace the existing lighting to create a safer environment which is at the end of its life allow the track to be used to its full potential again. The information submitted that there is no intention to increase training or competition sessions as part of the proposal. As such, whilst the concerns are understood, there would be no material harm in terms of noise resulting from the proposal.

Summary

- 17.14 The proposal adequately respects the amenity of its neighbours and of future occupants. Subject to conditions, the proposal is compliant with policies 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 of the Local Plan. The associated construction and environmental impacts would be acceptable in accordance with policies 33, 34, 35 and 36 of the Local Plan.

18. Sustainability

- 18.1 The existing floodlighting is provided by 12 columns of varied height with 3-4 metal halide fitting heads on each column. The proposed replacement floodlight would utilise LED luminaires which would use less than a third of the power of metal halide for equivalent light output, for example the

recommended replacement for the 400W metal halide flood is a 120W LED.

- 18.2 Whilst the lighting heads are outdated and require replacement, the applicant did explore the re-use of existing columns. The move to LED requires new heads, the increased weight means they cannot be retrofit into the existing columns and the limited height of the existing columns would not deliver the spill decrease benefits of the current scheme.
- 18.3 The proposal appropriately incorporates the principles of sustainable design and construction through a reduction in energy usage, in compliance with Policy 28 of the Local Plan.

19. Other Matters

- 19.1 Site History
- 19.2 Representations have referred to previous proposals for floodlighting at the site. Officers note that an application submitted in 1993 (ref. C/94/0347) was withdrawn and therefore no formal decision was issued. A subsequent application in 1998 (ref. C/97/1237) was refused due to concerns relating to the impact of the development on the countryside, Green Belt, skyline and residential amenity.
- 19.3 Whilst the planning history is a material consideration, the 1998 decision predates the adopted Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and was made more than 25 years ago. Since that time, the site and its surroundings have evolved and there have been changes in national and local planning policy.
- 19.4 In assessing the current proposal, officers have carefully considered the issues identified in the historic refusal. However, the submitted plans, supporting information and visual assessments demonstrate that the additional floodlights would be viewed in the context of the existing sports facility and established floodlighting infrastructure. The proposed columns would not introduce a new form of development into the landscape and would not appear unduly prominent within the skyline. Furthermore, the impacts on visual amenity, the character of the area and nearby occupiers have been assessed against current planning policy and are considered acceptable.
- 19.5 Officers are therefore satisfied that the circumstances of the current proposal differ from those which led to the 1998 refusal and that the previous decision does not indicate that permission should be withheld in this case.

- 19.6 It is acknowledged that the concerns have been raised that the proposal forms part of a pattern of incremental expansion, or "planning creep", resulting in increasing levels of floodlighting across the site over time. Officers acknowledge the planning history of the sports ground and the previous permissions granted for floodlighting associated with the athletics track and hockey pitches.
- 19.7 However, each planning application must be assessed on its own merits against the development plan and other material considerations prevailing at the time of determination. The existence of previous permissions does not, in itself, indicate that the current proposal is unacceptable.

20. Third party representations

- 20.1 The remaining third-party representations not addressed in the preceding paragraphs are summarised and responded to in the table below:

Third party comment	Officer response
Consultation	The Council has undertaken consultation in accordance with the statutory requirements and its adopted procedures for planning applications. The application has been publicised through the Council's standard notification process, which is considered sufficient to bring the proposal to the attention of those who may be affected.
Independent assessment	Concern has been raised that the submitted lighting assessment should be subject to further independent scrutiny and that the extent of light pollution has not been adequately assessed. However, the application has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health team, who are the Council's specialist advisers on lighting and amenity impacts, and no objection has been raised. Officers are satisfied that sufficient technical information has been submitted to assess the proposal and are content that the scheme would not result in unacceptable levels of light spill, glare or light pollution. Accordingly, no further independent assessment is considered necessary.
Piecemeal development	The representations received raise concerns regarding piecemeal development. However, the current application relates to a specific proposal which must be determined on its own

	planning merits. Officers are satisfied that sufficient information has been submitted to assess the impacts of the proposed development and do not consider that the absence of a wider site lighting strategy justifies refusal of the application.
Human health	Concern has been raised regarding the potential effects of LED lighting on human health. The application has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health team, who raise no objection to the proposal. Officers are satisfied that the lighting scheme would not give rise to unacceptable impacts through glare, light spill or other forms of nuisance and therefore no health-related concerns have been identified that would warrant refusal of the application.
Alternative sites	The application relates to development within an existing, established sports facility. The planning assessment is therefore concerned with the acceptability of the proposed development at this site, having regard to its impacts and compliance with relevant planning policy. No alternative site assessment is required in this instance, and there is no policy requirement for the applicant to demonstrate that the proposal could not be accommodated elsewhere. Officers have therefore assessed the application on its own merits and are satisfied that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms.

Table 3 Officer response to third party representations

21. Planning balance

- 21.1 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 21.2 Summary of harm
- 21.3 The report acknowledges that the proposal would result in a low level of harm to the West Cambridge Conservation Area and the Emmanuel College Pavillion, however determines that this is outweighed by the public benefits resulting from the scheme including continued operation of an

important public sporting facility and the reduced environmental and amenity impacts.

21.4 Summary of benefits

21.5 The proposed floodlighting would enable the public athletics track and infield to achieve their full operational potential, supporting year-round, safe and accessible use by both organised clubs and members of the public. The scheme would improve lighting uniformity whilst reducing overall illuminance levels and light spill. This would allow the facility to be used more effectively during the winter months and would enable compliance with England Athletics Class III TrackMark lighting requirements for training and recreational use.

21.6 The proposal would offer an ecological improvement due to the reduction in lighting spill and reduction of lux levels at the perimeter of the track and good lighting containment.

21.7 The proposal would offer an improvement to amenity with the model outputs on the vertical plane reducing as part of the proposal. The increase in height allows greater directionality and therefore reduced lighting spill to residential occupiers meaning that the lux levels meeting the homes would be below the levels set out in the 2021 guidance.

21.8 The proposal would increase the energy efficiency of the flooding lights through changing from metal halide to LED lighting.

21.9 Having taken into account the provisions of the development plan, NPPF and NPPG guidance, the statutory requirements of section 66(1) and section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, the proposed development is recommended for approval.

22. Recommendation

22.1 **Approve** subject to:
-The planning conditions as set out below with minor amendments to the conditions as drafted delegated to officers.

23. Planning conditions

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

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.

Reason: In the interests of good planning, for the avoidance of doubt and to facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the measures set out in the Hockey Athletics Track Floodlighting Replacement Scheme Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – WSP dated July 2025. The ecological measures shall thereafter be retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To conserve and enhance ecological interests (Cambridge Local Plan, policy 70).

4. The columns and floodlights as approved shall be constructed / installed, operated, and maintained thereafter in accordance with all submitted plans and the following documents:

- Light Spill Assessment: Existing vs Proposed Floodlighting' (prepared by WSP).
- 'New LED Floodlight Installation Lighting Impact Assessment In Accordance with ILP GN01 'Guidance notes for the reduction of Obtrusive Light''

Reason: To protect residential amenity at the neighbouring residential properties (Cambridge Local Plan 2018, Policy 34)

5. The floodlighting serving the athletics track hereby approved shall only be operated during the hours of 3.30pm and 6.30pm on five afternoons/evenings in any one week (Monday to Sunday inclusive), and shall only be operated during the hours of 6.30pm and 9.30pm on three evenings in any one week (Monday to Friday inclusive). The floodlighting shall not be operated after 6.30pm on Saturdays or Sundays.

Reason: To protect residential amenity at the neighbouring residential properties (Cambridge Local Plan 2018, Policy 34)

6. No construction or demolition work shall be carried out and no plant or power operated machinery operated other than between the following hours: 0800

hours and 1800 hours on Monday to Friday, 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturday and at no time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays, unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the adjoining properties. (Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policy 35).