

Proposed development: Full Planning Application (Regulation 4) for Full Planning Permission for Installation of 3.030 metre high ball stopping netting along the South Eastern boundary.

**Site address:
College Field behind Blackburn Northern
Ramsgreave Avenue
Blackburn
BB1 8NA**

Applicant: Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council

Ward: Roe Lee

**Councillor Phil Riley
Councillor Sylvia Liddle
Councillor Ron Whittle**



1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1** The proposed 3.030 metre high ball-stopping netting is recommended to be granted planning permission for the reason as follows:
- The proposal is of appropriate design and appearance and would not be detrimental to the amenity for users of the playing field or occupiers of neighbouring dwellings or compromise highway safety in accordance with Policies 8, 9, 10, 11, 38 and 40 of the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan Part 2 (December 2015).
- 1.2** It is recommended that the application be approved subject to a condition that the height and appearance be in accordance with the location and length plan marked received 30th May 2018, the length and width details marked received 8th June 2018, and the technical specification details marked received 26th June 2018.
- 1.3** It is also recommended that the application be approved subject to a second condition restricting the construction of the development to 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday, in order to secure residential amenity.

2.0 KEY ISSUES/SUMMARY OF PLANNING BALANCE

- 2.1** The application is before the Committee since the application has been made by the Council's Environment and Leisure Department.
- 2.2** Members are also advised that three letters of objection have been submitted. A summary of the objections is provided at 6.1 below, and the full texts of the objections are appended to this report at the end.
- 2.3** The key issues to be addressed are as follows:
- Provision and purpose of green infrastructure
 - Neighbour amenity issues
 - The effect of the development on the surrounding environment
 - Scale and design considerations

3.0 RATIONALE

3.1 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1.1** The College Playing Field is situated on the western side of Pleckgate Road, and is bounded on the east by Ramsgrave Avenue, on the north by Ramsgrave Drive, on the west by the tennis dome and Blackburn Northern, and on the south by Pleckgate School.
- 3.1.2** The playing field is designated in the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan Part 2 as green infrastructure. In conjunction with the Wooldridge Playing

Field on the opposite side of Pleckgate Road, the site has gone through a period of levelling and regrading, including the provision of new drainage, following planning permission granted in 2016 (10/15/1525).

- 3.1.3 The rationale behind the application is the way the football pitch is to be laid out, with one goal end being in front of the rear elevations of 141-145 Pleckgate Road. The intention is to provide a measure of protection to these properties from footballs missing their intended target.

3.2 Proposed Development

- 3.2.1 The proposal is for twin wire system panel fencing to be erected along the edge of the football field to the rear of Nos. 141 to 145 Pleckgate Road. The full length of the fencing is proposed to be 40.15 metres, running along the top of the bank parallel to Ramsgreave Avenue behind the goalline.
- 3.2.2 The fence is proposed to be a height of 3.030 metres – reduced from the originally proposed 4 metres to take account of the ground level being raised above the ground level of the adjacent dwellings.
- 3.2.3 The closest point to which the fencing will come to the rear of the adjacent properties is approximately 7 – 7.5 metres from the rear elevation of No. 145 Pleckgate Road. This distance increases to approximately 17 metres at the southern end of No. 143 Pleckgate Road.

3.3 Development Plan

- 3.3.1 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan Part 2:

Policy 11: “Design”
Policy 8: “Development and People”
Policy 9: “Development and the Environment”
Policy 10: “Accessibility and Transport”
Policy 38: “Green Infrastructure on the Adopted Policies Map”
Policy 40: “Integrating Green Infrastructure and Ecological Networks with New Development”

- 3.3.2 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Core Strategy (Local Plan Part 1):

Policy CS11: “Facilities and Services”

3.4 Other Material Planning Considerations

- 3.4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Section 7: “Requiring Good Design”

Section 8: “Promoting Healthy Communities”

3.5 Assessment

- 3.5.1 Provision and Purpose of Green Infrastructure. Local Plan Part 2 describes green infrastructure as including sports fields amongst others, with such spaces being multi-functional and delivering “a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities, such as recreation...” (Paragraph 7.3).
- 3.5.2 The Government’s National Planning Policy Framework regards access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation as being important contributory factors to the health and well-being of local communities (NPPF Paragraph 73).
- 3.5.3 As set out in the 2015 planning application for regrading, the Wooldridge and College Playing Fields have been returned to full usage following joint funding by the Council and the East Lancashire Football development Association (ELFDA). The provision is aimed at facilitating junior football matches at weekends as well as providing opportunities for use by the local schools during term time.
- 3.5.4 The proposal to install a section of fencing along a section of the south-east boundary has come about through concern raised about the implications of football being played in the vicinity of dwellings close to the College Field.
- 3.5.5 It is considered that the proposed fencing, in aiming to ensure that maximum use of the sports field is possible whilst maintaining neighbouring residential amenity. The proposal would then accord with both the NPPF and the Local Plan Part 2.
- 3.5.6 How the fencing would affect neighbour amenity, the arguments presented by local residents on both sides of the debate, and whether or not amenity is secured or harmed by the fencing, is discussed at 3.5.7 below.
- 3.5.7 Neighbour Amenity Issues. Policy 8 requires development to secure a satisfactory level of amenity and safety for surrounding uses, that development ensures a level of community safety and that there is adequate provision of facilities for young people.
- 3.5.8 Three properties adjoining each other are closest to and most likely to be affected by the development of the fencing: 141, 143 and 145 Pleckgate Road. The proposed development is being brought forward to protect the property of the residents, one of whom objects to the goalposts being sited to the rear of her property on the grounds that footballs landing there may possibly cause damage. The occupants of the other two properties oppose the development on the grounds of loss of outlook and the saleability of their home.

- 3.5.9 No. 145 Pleckgate Road, belonging to one of the objectors, has a high hedge to the rear boundary, with just one first floor window having a view over the hedge towards the playing field, the other two at first floor level being obscure glazed. It is considered that ground floor windows would not be affected by the fencing.
- 3.5.10 No. 143 Pleckgate Road, belonging to the second objector, has a high level of vegetation and a conifer along the rear boundary. This property has just one first floor window, and that is obscure glazed. It is considered that the ground floor windows of this property would also not be unduly affected by the fencing.
- 3.5.11 It should be noted that there is no right to a view enshrined in planning law. View is not regarded as amenity, and its loss does not constitute a valid reason for refusing planning permission for development. For the same reason, the depreciation of the value of a house cannot be taken into consideration.
- 3.5.12 No. 141 Pleckgate Road is the furthest of the three properties from the proposed development. Whilst having a stone wall along its rear boundary, it is a little more open than the other two properties, and has two large first floor windows more exposed towards the land beyond.
- 3.5.13 Discussions have been held between Council officers to look at the position and height of the proposed fence. It was agreed that the height would be reduced to the 3 metres being assessed by Committee (having originally been 4 metres) but that – given the angled relationship between the football pitch and the adjacent properties – it was felt that the proposed location was probably correct for the protection of all three properties for the long term future.
- 3.5.14 This recommendation for approval is therefore based on the proposal meeting the requirements of Policy 8 in that it secures the future of the football pitch in providing protection for properties that might otherwise be at risk of damage from footballs.
- 3.5.15 The effect of the development on the surrounding environment. Policy 9 requires development on green infrastructure land to secure the continuing function of the infrastructure. If harm is caused, it should be demonstrated that the need or benefit arising from the development outweighs the harm.
- 3.5.16 At present, the south-eastern end of the field has an open vista, with views beyond the adjacent dwellings that takes in the land as it rises towards Four Lane Ends. The colour and appearance of the fence are such that it is unlikely to cause undue harm to the setting of the field or the vista enjoyed by users of the field. Moreover, it is considered that the fencing does not interfere with the function of the infrastructure by virtue of the function being the provision of football facilities. On the contrary, the fencing is outside the playing area and assists in its function through providing a safety feature for neighbouring properties.

3.5.17 It is noted that similar fencing has already been established at two other points along the periphery of the playing field – a stretch having been erected around the boundary with the tennis dome, and a stretch separating the Blackburn Rovers Ladies pitch from Ramsgreave Avenue at the north end of the site. It is considered that the principle of the use of such fencing at key positions where the facilities border other uses has been established.

3.5.18 It is noted also that a public right of way exists adjacent to the football field. This runs along the tarmacked road that is no longer used as a vehicular highway, and access to the right of way is retained as at present.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Approve

5.0 PLANNING HISTORY

5.1 10/15/1525: Levelling and regrading including new drainage of existing playing fields. Approved under delegated powers 24th March 2016.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 18 neighbours were notified and one site notice erected. Three objections have been received, and these can be summarised as follows:

- Loss of view
- Detrimental to property
- Loss of value to property

6.2 No statutory bodies were consulted

7.0 **CONTACT OFFICER: John Wilson, Planner**

8.0 **DATE PREPARED: 27th June 2018**

9.0 SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Objection Dave Souch, 145 Pleckgate Road, Blackburn

FAO John Wilson

Good morning John

With regard to our conversation last Thursday, I wish to oppose this application for the installation of the ball stopping netting along the South Eastern boundary at the College Field behind Blackburn Northern.

The fields which this netting/fence is proposed to be installed is directly behind the rear of 141, 143, and 145 Pleckgate Road, of which 145 Pleckgate Road is the nearest to the field, this is my home. This proposed installation will only directly effect these 3 houses, 143 Pleckgate Road and myself feel that any installation of any kind would have a detrimental impact on us, as we would have to look at this 365 days a year and not out onto the green fields as at this moment in time, which is extremely pleasant, I can not think of anything worse than looking at netting/fence, no matter how it is disguised. Whether I am in my bedroom or rear garden I will always be faced with this fencing/netting. My neighbour who is very elderly lady and lived at her address for over 30 years, feels the same, especially as she is in effect house bound. I understand the purpose of the fence: is to stop balls from landing in our rear gardens, judging from last years football games on the field to the front of my house, there will not be many games being played. So the amount of balls landing in our gardens would be negligible, something I can deal with.

When these fields were originally proposed and taken over on a 25 year lease by a local football league, it was made clear by Councillor Philip Riley, that no permeant structure would be placed onto these grounds and any proposal would be opposed by the council. This netting would be a permeant structure. The layout of these football pitches was discussed at these meetings, the original drawings of the pitch layout showed a small children's pitch being placed were the current one has been marked, with the goals being at 90 degrees to the current position and second full size pitch being near to houses on Ramsgreave Drive. I have also been made aware by a third party connected to this football league and managers of clubs who wish to use these pitches, that once they have secured this fencing/netting they will be applying for planning permission to erect flood lighting so that they can train in the evening. Again this was something that we were told would not happen.

As discussed, please feel free to call me so that we can arrange to meet up, where I will able to show you clearly how the proposed installation would have a detrimental impact on my life and my neighbours, potentially affecting the value of my home, all for the sake of a free games of football.

Yours sincerely

Dave Souch

145 Pleckgate Road

Blackburn

Objection Mrs B Robinson, 143 Pleckgate Road, Blackburn

To Mr Wilson

I am 83 yrs old and have lived in my home for 30 yrs, I am virtually house bound and the rear of my house looks out onto the College Field behind Blackburn Northern, this is my only real view. I do not want to have to look out of windows or garden and see a ball stopping net which will be there all the time, even when football is not being played during the summer months. I cherish my view and do not want to feel as if I am looking at a prison fence. For those people who are making this application for the fencing, they do not have to look at it, and if they lived here I am certain that they would not want to live with this either.

This fencing if erected will spoil the area and for the amount of times football is will be played, weekends, seems very unnecessary. The football league should go back to it's original plans for the pitches, by putting a children's pitch there with the goals running in the opposite direction where fencing already exists. As originally it was going to be for children, I cannot see how the ball will affect any ones home.

I wish to oppose this application and any amendments to the application in the strongest of terms. This based on the fact it will be detrimental to my outlook and I am also concerned such a permeant structure will affect the salability and price of my home.

Objection Dave Souch, 145 Pleckgate Road, Blackburn

FAO John Wilson

Good morning John

With regard to our conversation last Thursday, I wish to oppose this application for the installation of the ball stopping netting along the South Eastern boundary at the College Field behind Blackburn Northern.

The fields which this netting/fence is proposed to be installed is directly behind the rear of 141, 143, and 145 Pleckgate Road, of which 145 Pleckgate Road is the nearest to the field, this is my home. This proposed installation will only directly effect these 3 houses, 143 Pleckgate Road and myself feel that any installation of any kind would have a detrimental impact on us, as we would have to look at this 365 days a year and not out onto the green fields as at this moment in time, which is extremely pleasant, I can not think of anything worse than looking at netting/fence, no matter how it is disguised. Whether I am in my bedroom or rear garden I will always be faced with this fencing/netting. My neighbour who is very elderly lady and lived at her address for over 30 years, feels the same, especially as she is in effect house bound. I understand the purpose of the fence: is to stop balls from landing in our rear gardens, judging from last years football games on the field to the front of my house, there will not be many games being played. So the amount of balls landing in our gardens would be negligible, something I can deal with.

When these fields were originally proposed and taken over on a 25 year lease by a local football league, it was made clear by Councillor Philip Riley, that no permeant structure would be placed onto these grounds and any proposal would be opposed by the council. This netting would be a permeant structure. The layout of these football pitches was discussed at these meetings, the original drawings of the pitch layout showed a small children's pitch being placed were the current one has been marked, with the goals being at 90 degrees to the current position and second full size pitch being near to houses on Ramsgrave Drive.

I have also been made aware by a third party connected to this football league and managers of clubs who wish to use these pitches, that once they have secured this fencing/netting they will be applying for planning permission to erect flood lighting so that they can train in the evening. Again this was something that we were told would not happen.

As discussed, please feel free to call me so that we can arrange to meet up, where I will able to show you clearly how the proposed installation would have a detrimental impact on my life and my neighbours, potentially affecting the value of my home, all for the sake of a free games of football.
