

PL/26/0162 - RIVER ACADEMY SCHOOL - Proposed Floodlighting

CADRA would like to raise concerns regarding the proposed floodlighting of the school's outdoor hard court, particularly in relation to light pollution and the impact on the surrounding natural and residential environment.

1. Impact on Protected Natural Corridors

The site sits immediately adjacent to the Thames corridor and the Warren escarpment, both of which are recognised in Reading Borough Council policy as sensitive natural environments. Floodlighting in this location would be highly visible along the river and across to the Warren, altering the character of these protected landscapes, especially during darker months.

2. Effects on Wildlife

The river corridor supports a significant population of bats and birds that rely on dark, connected habitats for movement and feeding. Artificial lighting in this location risks disrupting these species, contrary to local biodiversity and ecological protection policies.

3. Light Pollution Affecting Nearby Homes

Properties across the river—including those along the Warren, Upper Warren Avenue and Ridge Hall Close—are likely to experience intrusive light spill. Given the elevated position of many of these homes, the visual impact could be considerable.

4. Loss of Screening Vegetation

A substantial section of mature hedge along the southern boundary of the school playing field was removed some time ago. This hedge was located on Thames Promenade land and previously provided effective screening between the school and the river. Its removal has increased the visibility of the site and exacerbates concerns about lighting impact. Only the western half of the hedge remains, clearly showing the extent of what was lost. A few small replacement trees have been planted on the southern edge, but many appear dead or in poor condition and do not provide meaningful screening.

5. Need for Reinstatement and Strengthened Planting

Reinstating the removed hedge and replacing the failed trees—along with additional planting—would help restore the natural buffer that previously mitigated visual impact. With a robust, healthy boundary habitat in place, concerns about light spill and landscape impact would be significantly reduced.

Conclusion

We understand that encouraging out of school hours sports facilities for students is desirable. However, for the reasons we have given, CADRA objects to the application as it stands. If acceptable mitigations could be made, including replanting the removed hedgerow with mature specimens and more shaded lighting, then the application may be acceptable to us.