

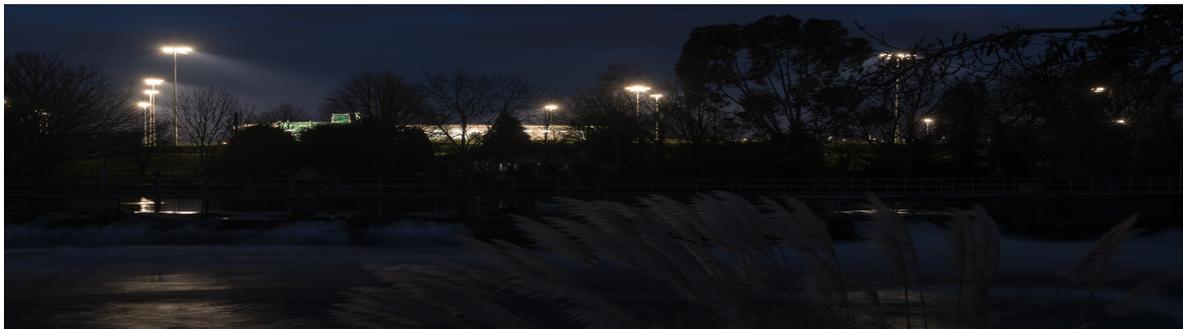
## **PRESS RELEASE: WATERSIDE DRIVE RULED UNLAWFUL**

As you probably know the planning permission for the sports hub was found unlawful and quashed by the High Court on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. Then the following day Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) granted themselves planning permission for an almost identical proposal. The main difference was that the height of the floodlights was increased.

Officers convinced their Councillors by gross misrepresentation that there would be “moderate to minor visual impact” to the surrounding properties (see photos presented to the planning committee). Landscaping and planting was proposed to mitigate the impact of the lighting, but anyone can see that the visual impact far exceeds anything “moderate to minor”. These ‘impressions’ of floodlights suggest they would hardly be noticeable at night:



But in fact it looks like this:



This also has a negative impact on the natural habitat for wildlife species, like birds, insects, bats and other animals who rely on dark skies for feeding and navigating.

Local residents, with the help of Surrey councillor Tim Evans, have been working with EBC over the winter to monitor and try to minimise the impact of the lighting. This has borne some fruit, but on a large number of points EBC has delayed its

responses and promised actions, not maintained the planting and actually refused to baffle the floodlights.

We had been granted permission on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017 to return to the High Court for a hearing on the second planning permission on the grounds that it was **inconsistent** to grant permission for a scheme that had been found illegal the day before. We had failed to make any real progress with EBC for 18 months, and the Judge did not want to delay any longer, so the hearing was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019. Judge Mrs Justice Thornton ordered that this planning permission was also unlawful and refused permission to appeal on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

This is a sensitive site in the green belt, and EBC was required to provide an Environmental Impact Assessment during the first planning application. Large numbers of residents objected that the desk study did not take account of the actual impact on local residents, the environment or wildlife. This was proved to be the case during the period in which Waterside Drive has been operated.

We continue to hope that EBC will take a more considered and responsible approach to local concerns in future. If Waterside Drive is to continue operating it must be by making alterations to the scheme to improve the openness, reduce the negative impact of the floodlighting and control the hours of operation. We would like to thank everyone who has supported our Crowdfunding for the court case.