

MC/16/3411

Date Received: 11 August, 2016

Location: New Horizons Children Academy (Former Bishop Of Rochester Academy West Campus/Chatham South) Site, Park Crescent Chatham, ME4 6NR

Proposal: Extend existing play area into staff car park, staff car park to be relocated into existing dual drop off/ parking and play area, existing dual use space to become a permanent car park for staff/ visitors with allocated spaces for the SEN block and student drop off

Applicant: Hazle McCormack Young LLP

Agent: LLP Hazle McCormack Young LLP Leap House Frog Lane Tunbridge Wells TN1 1YT

Ward Chatham Central

Case Officer Mary Smith

Contact Number 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 16 November 2016.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawing 303 Rev P1 received 11 August 2016.

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

- 2 The parking spaces and the dedicated drop off/pick up area together with access thereto shall be kept available for staff and visitor parking and for pupil drop off/pick up respectively at all times, with no long-term parking to take place in the drop off/pick up area.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety and amenity with regard to Policies BNE2, T1 and T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 3 The submitted Travel Plan shall be implemented in accordance with its terms

and shall be kept in place, as reviewed thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of promoting safe and sustainable development and to accord with Policy T14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This retrospective application is for various alterations to the car parking, drop off and play area arrangements on this primary school site. The main alterations since application MC/13/1640 (for the refurbishment and alterations to the site to facilitate the conversion of the site from a secondary school to primary school) are:

- The relocation of the staff car park from the former hardcourt area to the northeast of the vehicular access onto Park Crescent to the dual drop off/parking and play area to the west near the new vehicular access onto Walderslade Road;
- The use of the former staff car park as play space with an area of additional soft play area to the south;
- The use of the dual drop off/parking and play area for parent drop off and for parking (staff, visitors and SEN staff) only; and
- Revisions to the school travel plan (a school crossing patrol on Walderslade Road is not included).

Once it had opened the school decided that it was impractical to use the intended drop off/parking area as a dual space to include pupil play. They found that it needed to be accessible throughout the day to provide parking for the SEN facility and as there is a student changeover during the lunchtime period. As an alternative they therefore created a permanent play area on the site of the former staff car park and moved the main parking area onto the area intended for dual use, which they consider safer for children.

Relevant Planning History

MC/16/0442	Details pursuant to condition 11 of planning permission MC/13/1640 Decision Discharge of condition Decided 18/07/2016
MC/15/1069	Details pursuant to condition 04 of planning permission MC/14/3668 Decision Discharge of condition Decided 01/06/2014
MC/14/3668	Part demolition of existing school building and full refurbishment and replacement of external fabric to provide additional classrooms and counselling facilities Decision Approved

	Decided 04/03/2015
MC/14/2081	Details pursuant to condition 8, 10, 11 and 13 of planning permission MC/13/1640 Decision Discharge of Conditions Decided 19/12/2014
MC/14/1205	Details pursuant to condition 4 of planning permission MC/13/1640 Decision Discharge of Conditions Decided 17/11/2015
MC/14/0905	Details pursuant to condition 6 of planning permission MC/13/1640 Decision Discharge of Conditions Decided 05/02/2015
MC/13/2844	Details pursuant to condition 03, 05 and 14 of planning permission MC/13/1640 Decision Discharge of Conditions Decided 23/01/2014
MC/13/1640	Extensive refurbishment and alterations including new access to Walderslade Road; provision of additional on-site parking and drop off point and extensions and alterations to existing buildings in order to facilitate conversion of secondary school to primary school Decision Approval With Conditions Decided 30/10/2013

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. Sport England has also been consulted.

Three letters of objection from local residents have been received in summary raising the following matters:

- Loss of drop off for parents inside the school site, residents were assured that this would be provided as part of the proposals to change the site from a secondary to a primary school and the changes have already happened;
- Park Crescent is overrun with cars at school opening and closing times, including parking across driveways and on yellow lines, traffic from both directions meeting in the middle (poor visibility due to the bend in the road), three point turns;
- Further pressure on the road, an accident waiting to happen, especially dangerous given the age and size of the pupils;
- The school is not yet at capacity even though gridlock is already occurring outside;

- Made worse due to the proximity of the Grammar School – parents are arriving to pick up from there whilst primary school parents are leaving;
- The submitted photos and data are not accurate;
- The application suggests that staff will monitor the car park in peak times but no evidence of this has been seen to date, they are unlikely to honour this undertaking and the Council would not enforce it;
- The school should look at parking across the whole site so that the drop off area could be re-established;
- It may be preferable to make school traffic one-way at all times (in from Walderslade Road, out into Park Crescent) and to encourage vehicles to turn right when leaving.

Sport England has no comment in relation to this development and say that their comments to previous application MC/13/1640 and subsequent discharge of conditions applications still apply.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (the NPPF) and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background

The conversion of the site from a secondary to a primary school did not require planning permission although many of the physical alterations associated with this did and were approved under reference MC/13/1640. At this time it was proposed to provide a significant area for parent parking/drop off and collection on the former games courts at the southern tip of the site, however in order to mitigate the loss of this area for sports purposes it was envisaged that the area be used for recreation outside of the peak drop off and collection times.

The current proposals were originally submitted pursuant to conditions of planning permission MC/13/1640 (refurbishment and alterations to facilitate conversion from a secondary school to primary school), however it was considered that the changes went beyond the terms of the matters covered by these conditions and therefore this new, full application has been submitted. In effect the current application, if approved, would supersede conditions 6 and 7 (part – provision and monitoring of drop-off area) and 9 (school travel plan including provision of a school crossing patrol in Walderslade Road) of this previous planning permission.

Principle

The site is located within the urban area as defined by the Local Plan. The area of the parking and play areas subject of the current application are also allocated as protected open space subject of Policy L3 of the Local Plan. Policy L3 says that development which would involve the loss of open space will not be permitted other

than in specified circumstances, one of these being that in the case of educational establishments the development is required for educational purposes and adequate areas for outdoor sports can be retained or provided elsewhere in the vicinity. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools although it also says that sports land should not be built on other than in exceptional circumstances (paragraphs 72 & 74).

In the current case the development is for education purposes and it results in an increase in the area which is permanently available for play. Although the new hard play area is smaller than the former dual use parking/play area it is stated that the BB99 (Building Bulletin 99 Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects) recommendations for soft play, hard play and habitat are still met. As at present the sports pitches area (grassed) on the site remain substandard (5,587sqm is provided whereas 12,600sqm is recommended) but Sport England has recognised that the areas of the site affected by the development are not reasonably capable of forming a playing pitch (grass).

Ideally the dual use of the larger hard surfaced area would be retained (they were formally tennis courts) in order to help compensate for the shortage of grassed sports pitches. However the desirability of the school in providing the main parking facilities in this area is recognised, as is the desirability of concentrating the primary school play areas together on the eastern side of the site. The school has also raised safety concerns regarding the dual use of an area for parking and play, albeit that this was intended to be at different times. In summary, on balance, it is considered that adequate provision for outdoor sports is retained on the site and that the development is acceptable with regard to Policy L3 of the Local Plan and the advice in the NPPF. The acceptability of the application therefore depends on matters of detail – the impact on amenity and highway safety.

Amenity

It is not considered that the physical changes or re-arrangements within the site have any direct adverse impact on the amenities of neighbours, however they do/will have a knock-on effect on local roads which does impact on the living conditions of neighbours. These highway effects will be considered below.

Highways

The approved car parking provision comprises 64 spaces for staff and a drop-off parking area for around 52 vehicles. The relocation of the staff car parking to the drop-off car park results in the loss of a single car parking space, which is unlikely to have a material impact. Of greater significance is the reduction in on-site facilities for parents to drop off children, on the basis that staff arrive earlier and utilise all the car parking provision within the site. All that remains for the purposes of drop-off and collection is around 6 dedicated drop-off spaces within a layby adjacent to the access road. This is likely to result in pupils being dropped-off on Park Crescent. The applicant calculates that it would be possible for around 81 cars to park on this street. This would seem a reasonable estimate, as there are dwellings on only one side of the road and the carriageway width is generous; parking could take place on both sides of the road at certain points. The Transport Statement contains a survey of

kerbside parking on Park Crescent undertaken over two days in May. This indicates that there were at least 33 parking opportunities in the morning and a minimum of 15 spaces available at around 3pm. The Transport Statement points out that the school currently operates at around 34% capacity and calculates that demand of for on-street drop-off could increase by around 53 spaces. Whilst this would cause demand to outstrip supply on Park Avenue, the survey indicates that it could be accommodated on Palmerston Road. Palmerston Road represents a much less attractive option and parents are likely to try to park on Park Crescent in the first instance.

The current proposal complies with Policy T13 of the Local Plan: an on-site drop-off facility is still proposed (albeit in a much reduced form) and car parking accords with the Council's standards. The Traffic Management Plan undertakes to provide supervision of the on-site drop-off facility in order to ensure that it remains available for the intended use and it is suggested that its use for this purpose is secured by planning condition. Overall, the current proposal is in line with other schools within Medway; the previously-agreed provision of a significant number of drop-off spaces was unusual and, arguably, did nothing to promote sustainable travel. The evidence submitted by the applicant's transport consultant suggests that the roads around the site would be busy at peak times, with competition for kerbside parking and some congestion as a result. However, this would be limited to short periods of the day and is likely to mean that vehicle speeds would be low. Parking restrictions are in place at the junctions of Walderslade Road/Park Crescent/Letchworth Avenue in order to preserve visibility. On this basis the proposed changes to the drop-off arrangements are not considered to generate a severe risk to highway safety.

A School Travel Plan has been submitted as part of this application. This does not include a school crossing patrol in Walderslade Road, which was a requirement of condition 9 of planning permission MC/13/1640. The school are concerned regarding the safety of this former proposal but more importantly have found that 80% of pupils and parents are coming from the east, across Park Crescent. It is therefore proposed to introduce a School Crossing Patrol on Park Crescent which reflects the movement patterns associated with the school. This would also seem a sensible option given the additional traffic and kerbside parking on Park Crescent generated by the changes to the drop-off arrangements.

In summary the parking and highway impacts of the development are considered acceptable, including with regard to Policies T1, T2, T13 and T14 of the Local Plan.

Local Finance Considerations

None considered relevant.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The school has made changes to the play and parking areas on the site which include a major reduction in the amount of parking spaces for parents to drop off and collect children within the site. It is recognised that this does/will have a knock-on impact on local streets at the start and end of the school day and that this can, at times, be inconvenient for local residents. However this, in common with virtually all school sites, is limited to short periods and it is not considered that it would give rise to a

severe risk to highway safety. On balance the application is therefore considered acceptable including with regard to Policies L3, BNE2, T1, T2, T13 and T14 of the Local Plan and the advice in the NPPF.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Committee due to the extent of the representations received expressing a view contrary to the recommendation.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>