



Report of the Chief Planning Officer

PLANS PANEL WEST

Date: 23 July, 2011

Subject: APPLICATION NUMBER 10/03063FU – IMPROVEMENTS TO ACCESS AND EGRESS WITH NEW PARKING AREA TO SCHOOL AND PLAYING FIELDS AT RICHMOND HOUSE SCHOOL, 168 - 170 OTLEY ROAD, LEEDS. LS16 5LG

APPLICANT

Richmond House School

DATE VALID

12 July 2010

TARGET DATE

06 September 2010

Electoral Wards Affected:

Weetwood

Yes

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant permission subject to the following conditions.

1. Standard 3 year time limit.
2. Details of approved plans
3. Car park to be surfaced and sealed prior to commencement of use to prevent surface water discharge to the highway
4. 2 motorcycle parking spaces to be provided on site
5. Landscaping scheme to be approved
6. Standard surface water drainage condition
7. Existing culverted watercourse to be investigated and remediation works carried out as required.
8. Area of pitch identified to be upgraded within 12 months of the car park being brought into use, in accordance with a scheme to be submitted.
9. Submit and implement a Travel Plan
10. Scheme for parking restrictions on Glen Road to be agreed in writing prior to commencement of development
11. A scheme setting out details of a Community Use agreement shall be agreed in writing prior to commencement of development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 This application is brought before Members at the request of Ward Councillor Sue Bentley due to the high level of local interest which the proposal has generated.

2.0 PROPOSAL:

2.1 The proposal seeks to layout a new car park on an area of school playing fields, with access from Glen Road.

2.2 The proposed car park is for use by staff members with a drop-off and pickup area for parents. It incorporates a drop-off area and parking space for 41 cars and 2 motorcycles, with an additional 2 car parking spaces for disabled users adjacent the school building.

2.3 The scheme also involves a re-ordering of the existing sports pitches, involving the laying out of a new petanque court and other associated ground improvements. There have been significant amendments to the scheme since it was first submitted, which originally proposed a new road bisecting the site and additional car parking to the north of the site, but instead now proposes a car park and drop-off area to the southern edge of the school site.

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS:

3.1 The site comprises an independent school serving children from 3 to 11 years of age, which is located just off the Otley Road (A660), and a substantial area of playing fields, within a predominantly residential area. The northern boundary of the site is adjacent to low-density pre-war housing of good quality stock, whilst the eastern boundary adjoins larger, more mature dwellings of significant character. The site slopes gently up from South to North.

3.2 There are three access points to the site, which are Cross Glen Road, Glen Road and Weetwood Lane.

3.3 A large part of the site is segregated from the highway by fencing at approximately 1.8m high.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

4.1 Following a review of the Council's records the following planning history on the site is considered relevant:-

- 09/02904/FU - Improvements to access, egress and internal link road to school and playing fields. Withdrawn, 26/08/2009.

5.0 HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS:

5.1 As part of the application process, the application has been amended significantly, having originally incorporated a new access road across the site with a turning area.

5.2 The scheme now makes no reference to a new access road, instead featuring a new parking area with drop-off points to the south-western side of the site.

5.3 Environmental improvements have also been incorporated which result in the bringing back into use of an area of land within the site to make it useable for sport

and recreation, following protracted discussions with Sport England, thus resulting in no overall loss of usable sports pitches, which will form the subject of a condition.

6.0 PUBLIC/LOCAL RESPONSE:

- 6.1 This application was advertised via site notices and also with an advert in the Press. 56 letters of representation have been received from local residents and other interested parties, of which 3 are letters of support, 52 are objections and one is a letter of comment from Ward Councillor Sue Bentley. A large number of these representations relate to the original drawings and refer to the impact on residential amenity which would result were the car park to be laid out on the Northern edge of the site. The application was re-advertised in May of this year, with a total of 22 letters of objection in response to the revised scheme. Objections relate to highway safety and in particular additional traffic and parking on surrounding streets, particularly Glen Road, visual amenity, lack of consultation with the local community and loss of playing pitches.
- 6.2 Councillor Sue Bentley has also commented on this application, requesting that it be brought to Panel in light of the level of local interest.

7.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES:

Statutory Consultees

SPORT ENGLAND.

- 7.1 Originally objected to the proposals but have now withdrawn their objection, stating that the proposal now meets the requirements of one of the exceptions of Policy E4, in that the playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development. This is based on a report prepared by a specialist sports turf consultant, commissioned by the developer, which shows that the area of sports pitch lost to car parking is unusable as a sports pitch without extensive engineering works. The area of sports pitch lost to car parking measures 1800m² whilst the compensation area gained will be between 1950m² and 2450m² depending on ground conditions and pitch specification for the area.

Non- Statutory Consultees

HIGHWAYS:

- 7.2 No objection to the current scheme, subject to contributions being provided for TRO's relating to the widening of the access to the car park and the submission of a Travel Plan.

LANDSCAPE:

- 7.3 No objection to current scheme.

DRAINAGE:

- 7.4 No objection subject to conditions relating to porous surfacing, monitoring of discharges and submission of a report into the status of the existing watercourse.

ACCESS:

- 7.5 No objection to the current scheme.

8.0 PLANNING POLICIES:

8.1 As required by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 this application has to be determined in accordance with the Leeds Unitary Development Plan (Review 2006) unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan:

8.2 The most relevant Policies in the adopted Leeds Unitary Development Plan are listed below.

- Policy GP5 refers to detailed planning considerations and states that development proposals should seek to avoid loss of amenity.
- Policy N6 states that development of playing fields will not normally be permitted unless there are special circumstances including a demonstrable net gain and no shortage of pitches in the local area.
- Policy N25 seeks to ensure that site boundary treatments are designed in a positive manner which is appropriate to the setting and character of the area.
- Policy T2 seeks to avoid any harm or detriment to all users of the highway.
- Policy T6 states that adequate access provision must be made for the disabled.
- Policy T7a states that all development must provide adequate and secure means of cycle storage.
- Policy T24 sets out specific criteria for parking provision.

National Guidance/Statements:

8.3 In addition to the principal elements of planning policy other advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and replacement national Planning Policy Statements (PPS) may be relevant, including;

- PPS-1 – Delivering Sustainable Development This PPG sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.
- PPG-13 Transport: This PPG's objectives are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level, to promote more sustainable transport choices both for carrying people and for moving freight, to encourage the active management of the pattern of urban growth and improve accessibility on foot and cycle.
- PPG-17 - Sport and recreation. This sets out the policies needed to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of Regional Planning Guidance (or any successor) and by local planning authorities in the preparation of development plans (or their successors).

9.0 MAIN ISSUES:

9.1 Having considered this application and representations, it is the considered view that the main issues in this case are:

- Highway Safety
- Community Involvement
- Visual amenity
- Loss of protected playing pitches and greenspaces
- Watercourses and culverts
- Summary and recommendation.

10.0 APPRAISAL:

Highway Safety:

- 10.1 The scheme raises a number of issues with regard to highway safety, as the school has a very wide catchment area covering Leeds, Bradford, Harrogate and other parts of North and West Yorkshire, which means that children are generally brought to the school by car.
- 10.2 The school has attended a number of meetings with Planning Officers and Highways Officers, and it is clear from those meetings that traditional methods of reducing car journeys, such as school buses or shared journeys, are less effective due to the wide range of journeys and destinations involved. The school has in fact explored a wide range of solutions aimed at reducing car travel direct to the school, with a "Park and Stride" scheme operating between the school and the nearby Village Hotel site whereby some parents are able to park at the hotel and walk down to the school with their children. Such schemes, however, have proven insufficient overall in providing safe and practical means for parents of very young children to safely drop off and/or collect them. The current scheme aims to significantly reduce the impact of car travel to and from the site by providing a designated drop-off area within the school grounds whilst at the same time creating a more formal parking area for staff members.
- 10.3 Highways Officers have reviewed the current proposals, and have agreed certain changes to the submitted drawings aimed at improving visibility and safety. In light of these recommended changes, it is therefore considered that the proposal will result in an overall improvement in terms of highway safety and also reduce in a net decrease in levels of congestion at peak times as parents will be able to drop off their children within the school grounds instead of potentially blocking traffic on Glen Road and other adjacent streets as currently happens.
- 10.4 The net effect of the scheme will therefore be to reduce numbers of cars parked on local streets by visitors to the school, which is considered both positive and beneficial with regard to highway safety. Officers therefore support the scheme on that basis.

Community involvement:

- 10.5 There have been a number of representations received which infer that the school has failed to interact with the local community, with proposals being presented as a fait-accompli. The school has in fact recently attended a meeting at which officers from Planning, Highways, the school governors and community representatives were in attendance. At this meeting, it was apparent that the school wishes to work with the local community to overcome issues relating to access and parking. Officers are therefore keen to work alongside the school in an effort to improve and enhance community relations when considering this proposal.

Visual amenity:

- 10.6 The proposed parking area is positioned to the Southern end of the site, adjacent to Glen Road. A number of planted areas are incorporated in the scheme on the outer edges of the parking areas, with other mature trees to be retained on the highway frontage, final details of which are to form part of a Landscaping condition. This is considered acceptable in terms of visual impact.

Protected greenspace and playing pitches:

- 10.7 The proposal is in on land allocated as Protected Playing Pitches in the Adopted Unitary Development Plan. An initial consultation with Sport England raised an objection to the proposal due to the loss of protected playing pitches contrary to guidance within PPG:17.
- 10.8 The current scheme has been carefully reworked to take those concerns into account, and now involves the upgrading of an unusable area of ground within the school for use as a sports pitch, meaning that there will be no net loss of usable sports pitches as the area to be laid out for parking will be smaller in area than the new upgraded area of land. On this basis, Sport England now considers that the proposal is acceptable subject also to a Community Use agreement to ensure that the pitches will be available for community use.

Watercourses and culverts:

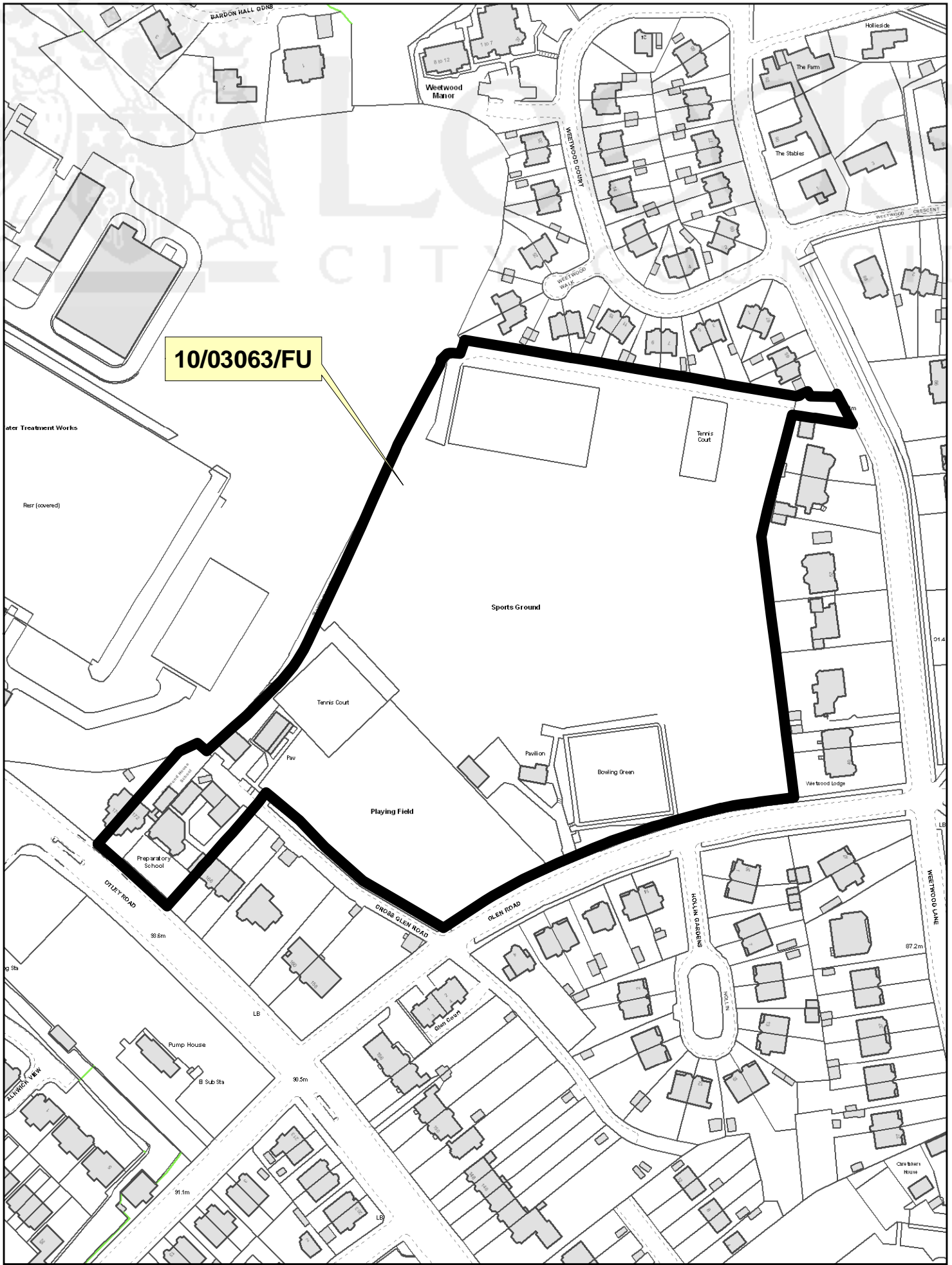
- 10.9 Concerns have been raised that the proposed parking area would be laid out in an area where a watercourse is believed to exist. Mains Drainage have indicated that this matter requires investigation by the developer and it will therefore be conditioned accordingly.

11.0 CONCLUSION:

- 11.1 Officers consider that the proposed car park and drop-off area will result in a marked improvement on the existing arrangements for parking at the school, and will provide a more ordered and controlled level of access and egress from the school grounds.
- 11.2 This is likely to improve existing traffic flows both to and adjacent the site, resulting in an overall improvement to existing arrangements. There is also likely to be no undue impact on existing levels of neighbouring residential amenity. Approval is therefore recommended subject to the conditions outlined at the head of this report.

Background Papers:

Application and history files.



EAST PLANS PANEL