

REPORT FOR CONSIDERATION AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Reference No: HGY/2007/1085

Ward: Alexandra

Date received: 29/05/2007

Last amended date: N/A

Drawing number of plans: 967/PL201 A, 201 B, 203 A, 204 A, 205 A & 206

Address: Alexandra Park Secondary School, Bidwell Gardens N11 2AZ

Proposal: Erection of single storey extension to sports hall for storage; installation of new floodlit all-weather pitch with 6 no. 10 metre high floodlight columns, and associated landscaping.

Existing Use: School grounds (grassed)

Proposed Use: Sports pitch

Applicant: The Governors Of Alexandra Park Secondary School

Ownership: Public

PLANNING DESIGNATIONS

Road Network: Borough Road

Officer Contact: David Paton

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION subject to conditions

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is part of the school grounds attached to Alexandra Park School, and forms a grassed area between the northern boundary of Albert Road Recreation Ground and the school sports hall. The Recreation Ground extends along the eastern boundary of the site to Bidwell Gardens, and contains a raised embankment adjacent to the school boundary. The nearest houses, in Bidwell Gardens are approximately 105m. away, and are protected from the site by the raised area and existing trees in the Recreation Ground. Entrances to the school are at the end of Bidwell Gardens (emergency vehicle access) and off Rhodes Avenue (main vehicle access, & pedestrian access). Pedestrian and cycle access is also across the Recreation Ground. Houses

in Rhodes Avenue are about 140m. away and are shielded from the site by existing school buildings.

The site is part of an area of Metropolitan Open Land that includes the recreation Ground, and the allotments and Muswell Hill Golf Course to the north of the school. The Recreation Ground is also designated as an Ecologically Valuable Site of local importance.

PLANNING HISTORY

August 2000 permission granted for demolition of existing accommodation and reconstruction of ground/first floor extension (changing rooms at ground and drama studio above) and external fire escape; erection of glazed roof over open courtyard to facilitate extension to existing dining room; erection of 2 open sided glazed canopies to facilitate informal link to science/main teaching block and performing arts/dance and hall; associated alterations to include 1st floor link to science centre.

June 2003 permission granted for demolition of caretakers house and store, art & design block and play centre; provision of temporary accommodation on car parking area; temporary construction access through park and provision of cycle path; alterations to parking areas; erection of single storey drama and music centre, erection of 2 storey science block and erection of a 4 storey sixth form centre to expand the school from a six form entry to an eight form entry to provide for education for children to 18 years old and to increase pupil numbers to 1380.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The current proposal is to create an all-weather pitch on an existing area of grass between the school sports hall (to the north) and the boundary with the Recreation Ground (to the south). The proposed pitch would measure 69m. long x 42m. wide, and would not be suitable for adult competitive matches. The facility would be for shared use between the school during the day (including after school activities) and community use in the evenings (as is the sports hall), mainly training and five- or seven-a-side football. The pitch would be floodlit by six 10m. high floodlights, which would allow, if appropriate, one of the two 5-a-side pitches that would be accommodated to be lit and the other to be unlit. The pitches would be available for use up to 21:30, and the floodlights would be programmed to automatically turn off at 21:40.

There would be a 3m. high green Weldmesh fence surrounding the new pitch, with the existing perimeter fence between the school and the Recreation Ground retained.

The scheme involves the removal of 4 small trees, but it is intended to replace them with a row of new trees on the eastern boundary, together with new shrubs on the southern boundary.

A new single storey equipment store, 5m. deep x 12 long, would be built as an extension to the existing sports hall, with materials (brick cladding and colour

coated steel sheeting for the roof), to match finishing materials on the sports hall.

CONSULTATION

Adjoining occupiers - 4-14 (even) Rhodes Avenue,
201 to 265 (odd), 265a, Albert Road N22
28- 80 (even) Bidwell Gardens N11
Rhodes Avenue Primary School; Blanche Neville School, Rhodes Avenue

[Note; the School has also carried out some pre-application consultation with local residents]

RESPONSES

21 letters in support have been received, presumably from parents of students at the school.

One objection on the grounds of heavy vehicles using Bidwell Gardens or Rhodes Avenue during construction; possible access to the new pitch from Bidwell Gardens; and increased traffic, parking and noise levels.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

CW1 Community Well-Being”
OS2 “Metropolitan Open Land”
UD3 “General Principles”

ANALYSIS / ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION

The main issues in this case are (1) how the proposal fits in with the MOL designation, (2) the benefits to the school, (3) possible effects on the amenities of nearby residential areas from the floodlighting, actual use and from traffic generated (4) trees and other issues.

1. Metropolitan Open Land.

The site is grassed but is fenced off and within the ownership of the school. There is thus no issue of loss of public access. The proposal is for facilities essential for outdoor sport and does not include any buildings, and therefore comprises development normally allowed in MOL. There is a degree of screening by existing trees and by the gradient of the land which rises to the north, and the floodlight columns should therefore not be unduly intrusive in views from adjacent open land. No objection under Policy OS2.

2. Benefit to school.

Policy CW1 seeks to ensure that good quality facilities are available provided they are appropriate to the location and meet a local need etc. The proposed playing pitch will assist the school in providing a wider range of sports facilities and will clearly be of benefit to the health and well-being of the pupils and young people in the area. Complies with Policy CW1.

3. Effect on residential amenity.

The nearest houses are well over 100m. away from the site and both Bidwell Gardens and Rhodes Avenue are shielded from it either by buildings (the existing school sports hall) or by raised open land. Floodlights would be “ultra low glare” and would be controlled by an automatic time clock. The height at 10 metres is reasonable; lower columns have been investigated but would mean that more light would be displaced sideways giving a greater area of glow and light spillage outside the pitch area. Nearby residential areas are therefore unlikely to be adversely affected by the use of the pitch, which would finish daily at 21:30 hours or the floodlighting, which would be switched off by 21:40.

The sports hall at the school is already used for community use out of school hours, and the additional use of the new pitch should not produce significant increases in traffic. Parking is available in the school grounds after school hours, and vehicle access is via Rhodes Avenue only, with pedestrian and cycle access also across the recreation ground.

4. Trees.

The laying out of the sports pitch would entail some minor levelling of the site (currently there is about a 1-metre drop from the north to the south of the site; the level would be set at a halfway point), and the loss of three or four modest hawthorn trees. Existing larger trees on the southern edge of the site on the Recreation Ground would be largely untouched, apart from some pruning of branches of an oak.

New replacement trees on the eastern boundary of the site are proposed, an additional tree within the park, and some hedging on the southern boundary. It would be beneficial to have a further two trees planted on the northern side to fill any gaps in tree cover.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The scheme complies with Policies OS2 “Metropolitan Open Land” and UD3 “General Principles” of the council’s Unitary Development Plan, and will provide considerable community benefit; due to its siting it does not have undue adverse effects on residential amenity, but it is appropriate that hours of floodlighting are controlled by condition.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION

Registered No. HGY/2007/1085

Applicant's drawing No(s): 967/PL201 A, 201 B, 203 A, 204 A, 205 A & 206

Subject to the following condition(s)

1. The development hereby authorised must be begun not later than the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission, failing which the permission shall be of no effect.

Reason: This condition is imposed by virtue of the provisions of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and to prevent the accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby authorised shall be carried out in complete accordance with the plans and specifications submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved details and in the interests of amenity.

3. No activities or use of the sports pitch hereby approved shall be carried on after 21:30 on any day, and all floodlights shall be turned off by 21:45 on any day.

Reason: In order to ensure the proposed development does not impinge on the amenities of adjacent occupiers.

4. A scheme for the treatment of the surroundings of the proposed development including the planting of trees and/or shrubs shall be submitted to, approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to provide a suitable setting for the proposed development in the interests of visual amenity.

5. Access to the sports pitch hereby permitted shall be restricted to the main school entrance off Rhodes Avenue and the existing pedestrian/cycle access from Albert Road Recreation Ground only, and the emergency school access from Bidwell Gardens shall not be used by users of the sports pitch for access to or egress at any time.

Reason: To protect the amenities of nearby residents.

6. The construction works of the development hereby granted shall not be carried out before 0800 or after 1800 hours Monday to Friday or before 0800 or after 1200 hours on Saturday and not at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: In order to ensure that the proposal does not prejudice the enjoyment of neighbouring occupiers of their properties.

7. Construction works shall not be commenced until vehicle wheel washing facilities have been provided. Such facilities shall be used by all vehicles leaving the site, and no work shall take place if at any time the said facilities

are not present or are otherwise incapable of use.

Reason: To ensure that the construction of the approved sports pitch does not prejudice the conditions of safety and cleanliness along the neighbouring highway.

REASONS FOR APPROVAL

The scheme complies with Policies OS2 "Metropolitan Open Land" and UD3 "General Principles" of the council's Unitary Development Plan, and will provide considerable community benefit.