
| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Report To: | The Planning Board | Date: | 1st June 2011 |
| Report By: | Head of Regeneration and Planning | Report No: | 11/0066/IC 06/11 |
| | | | Local Application Development |
| Contact Officer: | David Ashman | Contact No: | 01475 712416 |
| Subject: | Extension and alterations to school, new landscaping and creation of new playing fields at Gourock High School, Fletcher Avenue, Gourock | | |

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site consists of the grounds of Gourock High School and an area of open space, covering approximately 9,600 square metres, associated with Tower Hill. This area of ground presently consists of maintained grass and gorse bushes.

The school is accessed from Fletcher Avenue and the site rises steeply in a northwesterly direction from the road. The existing school buildings sit on terraced platforms. The area of open space slopes more gently downwards to the east and west from a central plateau.

The site is bound from the southeast to the southwest by residential development, from the west to the north by open space and an equipped play area, and from the north round to the east by unmaintained areas of open space, largely populated by gorse bushes.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to carry out refurbishment works to the school consisting of partial demolition and external redecoration of the remaining sections, the creation of new landscaping and redesign of the site layout, including the relocation of parking spaces, and the creation of new playing fields including the development of a new 2G pitch on the open space area.

The parts of the school to be demolished are the existing west wing and two smaller sections of the east wing, one of which consists of two small ground floor level rooms on its southeast edge and a small area of roof infrastructure on its northeast edge, above the main roof level. There are existing temporary buildings within the school grounds which are also to be removed.

The new build consists of a replacement western wing which will generally be two storeys in height with a greater area of underbuild at its southern edge. The existing block is generally single storey. The central part of the school is to be increased in height by a single storey to create additional classrooms, resulting in a four storey building. The existing undercroft area on the east wing is to be infilled to create improved toilet facilities.

The introduction of new cladding, to match the finishing materials on the proposed extensions, will lead to a unifying visual appearance of the whole building, rather than the present appearance

which suggests a sum of its individual parts. New brickwork cladding is to be introduced at lower levels with banded 3-colour rainscreen cladding introduced at upper levels. The cladding will also improve the thermal efficiency of the building. Incidental white render is also to be used. The entrance to the school is to be remodelled with the intention to present a more welcoming approach and to complement the internal refurbishment that is to take place.

The clutter and dominance of parking between the school and Fletcher Avenue is to be reduced with some parking relocated to the rear. A new walled garden and other elements of soft and hard landscaping are to be introduced on approach to the front of the school.

Two new sports playing surfaces are to be provided. A new multi-use games area (MUGA) is to be formed adjacent to the west wing of the school. The MUGA will not be floodlit. A full sized 2G pitch is proposed to the northwest of the school on the area of open space. This pitch is to be illuminated by six 15 metre high columns. New 2 metre high wire mesh boundary fencing is to be introduced around most of the school grounds although this increases in height to 5 metres around the sports pitch. The area around the sports pitch fencing will be softened by a planting regime and associated mounding earthworks.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy H1 - Safeguarding the Character and Amenity of Residential Areas

The character and amenity of existing residential areas, identified on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded, and where practicable, enhanced. New residential development will be acceptable, in principle, subject to other relevant Local Plan policies.

Local Plan Policy H9 - Non-Residential Development Proposals within Residential Areas

The introduction of new, or the extension of, non-residential uses in existing residential areas will be acceptable only where such uses are compatible with the character and amenity of the area and satisfy other relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Local Plan Policy LR1- Safeguarding Open Space

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will support, safeguard and where practicable, enhance:

- (a) areas identified as 'Open Space' on the Proposals Map;
- (b) other areas of open space of value in terms of their amenity to their surroundings and to the community and their function as wildlife corridors or wedges; and
- (c) where appropriate, encourage other relevant and compatible development for the purposes of leisure, recreation and sport.

Local Plan Policy DS1 - Preference for Development on Brownfield Sites

A sustainable settlement strategy will be encouraged by having a clear preference for all new development to be located on brownfield land within the urban areas of existing towns and smaller settlements.

Local Plan Policy DS5 - Promotion of Quality in New Building Design and in Townscape/Landscaping

The urban environment and built heritage of Inverclyde will be protected and enhanced through controls on development that would have an unacceptable impact on the quality of this resource. Quality in new building design and landscaping will be encouraged to enhance Inverclyde's townscapes.

Local Plan Policy UT1 - Sustainable Use of Existing Infrastructure

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to direct new development to areas where connections to existing service infrastructure and public utilities are available, and will work with developers, public utility companies and other providers of service infrastructure to ensure that the most efficient use is made of existing infrastructure. The Council will also encourage continued investment in existing infrastructure, with a view to improving service provision.

Local Plan Policy UT3 - Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will encourage the inclusion of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems in appropriate developments, and where included will require agreement to be reached in respect of the continual maintenance of the proposed system prior to planning permission being granted.

CONSULTATIONS

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services - The increase in site parking from 34 to 76 spaces is noted. It is noted that no provision has been made for buses which is likely to cause congestion in Fletcher Avenue. Drainage provisions are satisfactory in principle. The lighting provisions are also acceptable.

SportScotland - No objection but it is advised that their guidance suggests for a school roll of 500-600 pupils pitch provision of 1 synthetic surface pitch and 2 grass pitches should be made. Current proposals do not meet minimum provision. If only one pitch is to be provided a short pile 3G surface should be used as it is more flexible for a range of sports.

Head Of Safer And Inclusive Communities – It is suggested that conditions be attached to a grant of planning permission in respect of searches for Japanese Knotweed and any contaminants.

Biodiversity Officer – There are no ecological issues of concern.

Strathclyde Fire Brigade - No comment.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 25th March 2011 as there are no premises on neighbouring land.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The application was the subject of neighbour notification and press advertisement. 20 representations have been received. The matters of concern may be summarised as follows:

- 1) Objection to removal of open space associated with Tower Hill.
- 2) Adverse impact on wildlife.
- 3) Creation of security issues.
- 4) The pitch will draw more people to the area at night increasing likelihood of vandalism.
- 5) The pitch is not necessary. There is a nearby pitch which could be used.
- 6) Call for a public meeting to discuss the proposal as there has been little public consultation.
- 7) The open space area should not be used for the provision of parking facilities.
- 8) Overprovision of sports pitches.

9) Adverse impact on landscape (setting) of Tower Hill.

One additional representation requests the imposition of a condition requiring archaeological investigation during development.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the determination of this application are the Local Plan, the consultation responses, the letters of representation and the applicant's supporting information.

With the exception of the proposed 2G sports pitch, development is contained within the grounds of the existing Gourrock High School and, as no change of use is proposed by this application, it follows that compliance with policies H1, DS1, UT1 and H9 is achieved. I consider that the design of the proposed extensions makes a positive architectural statement, helping to provide a sense of renewal, and that the other external alterations to the existing building will create an impression of continuity and unity between the newer and older parts of the resultant building. In this respect, a sense of new build quality will be created and compliance with policy DS5 will be achieved.

The Head of Environmental and Commercial Services has expressed satisfaction over the sustainable drainage regime to be implemented on the site and, therefore, compliance with policy UT3 is achieved.

Part of the application site extends into ground associated with Tower Hill. This ground is covered by policy LR1. As the proposal will enhance the recreational use of an area of open space for sports development there is no conflict in principle with this policy. With respect to this policy I also note that the sports pitch is to be available for community use outwith normal school hours.

It is my conclusion that, in policy terms, the proposal accords with the Local Plan. It remains to be considered, however, if any material considerations suggest that planning permission should not be granted. In this respect I shall now refer to the consultation replies and public representations.

The responses of the Fire Brigade and the Council's Biodiversity Officer present no obstacle to development.

The Head of Environmental and Commercial Services does not object to the application but highlights two policy issues. He notes that the number of car parking spaces is to be increased within the site but that no provision is made for bus parking. Currently there is no provision for bus parking and I consider that the geometry of the site does not offer the opportunity to create dedicated bus drop off and turning facilities. Nevertheless, with the provision of additional car parking spaces within the site there should be less potential for congestion on Fletcher Avenue.

Sportscotland's comments relate to the level of sports pitch provision and pitch surfacing. Although noting their comment on underprovision of pitches, there is presently no full size pitch on the site. The opportunity is being taken with the refurbishment of the school to provide such a pitch, in addition to a MUGA, where there is no existing provision. There are not sufficient grounds available to provide 3 pitches. As an improvement on the existing lack of provision I do not consider that reservations by Sportscotland on underprovision merit refusal of the application. On the matter of pitch surfacing, an undertaking has been given to investigate a priced option for a 3G short pile to be included in the subsequent tender documentation. The provision of a 3G pitch is an aspiration that may be realised. Should this not be possible then I regard the provision of a 2G pitch to be a reasonable reserve position and consider again that, in view of the present lack of full size pitch facilities, the provision of a 2G rather than a 3G pitch is not grounds for refusal of the application.

With respect to the points of objection raised by members of the public which have not already been addressed in my assessment, whilst the provision of the sports pitch would enclose a presently open area of land I am satisfied that considerable ground will be left for informal

recreational activity on both sides of the footpath leading up to the tower. The identified activities of children playing and dog walking will still be possible within a large area. The Council's Biodiversity Officer has not identified any wildlife concerns that either merit specific protection or that suggest planning permission should not be granted. The sports pitch will be surrounded by fencing and will be floodlit when in use. Greater public presence in the area is more likely to result in a decrease in incidences of vandalism, thereby potentially improving security.

The need for the full size pitch has been questioned in view of other facilities within the local area. Dedicated modern pitches are required as an essential part of the curriculum and have to be readily accessible to school pupils.

An objection has been raised on the basis of lack of consultation. As a "major" application, as defined by planning regulations, the proposal passed through the full pre-application consultation process, including an advertised public event which engaged the community. I am therefore satisfied that adequate public consultation was undertaken prior to submission of the application.

Although some concern has been expressed that part of the current open space is to be used for parking provision for the school, I am satisfied that the plans show all parking will be contained within the existing school grounds.

Concern has also been expressed over the potential impact of the development on the setting of Tower Hill. Any impact will relate primarily to the sports pitch rather than the proposed alterations to the school. I appreciate that the local community values Tower Hill but note that only part of the area will be affected by the proposed development. I have assessed the relationship between the proposed pitch and the tower on site. They are separated by areas of maintained grass, gorse bushes, paths and a distance of approximately 116 metres. These factors combine to convince me that the setting of the tower will not be compromised by the pitch or its associated fencing and floodlights.

There are no other relevant material planning considerations and none of those I have assessed suggest that this development, which accords with the Local Plan, should not be supported subject to the imposition of relevant conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to conditions

Conditions

1. That the development to which this permission relates must be begun within 3 years from the date of this permission.
2. That prior to the start of development, details of a survey for the presence of Japanese Knotweed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and that, for the avoidance of doubt, this shall contain a methodology and treatment statement where any is found. Development shall not proceed until treatment is completed as per the methodology and treatment statement. Any variation to the treatment methodologies will require subsequent approval by the Planning Authority prior to development starting on site.
3. That the development shall not commence until a risk assessment, including any necessary remediation strategy with timescale for implementation, of all pollutant linkages, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The investigations and assessment shall be site-specific and completed in accordance with acceptable codes of practice. The Remediation Strategy shall include verification/validation methodologies. This

may be incorporated as part of a ground condition report and should include an appraisal of options.

4. That on completion of remediation and verification/validation works and prior to the site being occupied, the developer shall submit a Completion Report for approval, in writing by the Planning Authority, confirming that the works have been carried out in accordance with the remediation strategy. This report shall demonstrate that no pollutant linkages remain or are likely to occur and include (but not be limited to) a collation of verification/validation certificates, analysis information, remediation lifespan, maintenance/aftercare information and details of imported/disposed/reused materials relevant to the site.
5. That the presence of any previously unrecorded contamination or variation to reported ground conditions that becomes evident during site works shall be brought to the attention of the Planning Authority within one week. Consequential amendments to the Remediation Strategy shall not be implemented unless it has been submitted to and approved, in writing by the Planning Authority.
6. That no material shall be imported onto the site until written details of the source of the imported material has been submitted for approval, in writing by the Planning Authority. The details, which shall be submitted no later than four weeks prior to the material being imported onto the site, shall include; the source of the imported material, any potential source(s) of contamination within 50 metres of the source of the material to be imported and verification analysis information. The material must not be imported on to the site until written approval has first been received from the Planning Authority. The material from the source agreed only shall be imported in strict accordance with these agreed details.
7. That samples of all facing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority prior to their use.
8. That prior to the commencement of development, full details of the hard and soft landscaping scheme hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority including the following details:
 - (a) the full scheme of tree and shrub planting incorporating details of the location, number, variety and size of trees and shrubs to be planted;
 - (b) details of the phasing of the above works;
 - (c) details of the maintenance and management of this landscaping;
 - (d) samples or catalogue details of the variety of hard surfacing.
9. That any trees, shrubs or areas of grass which die, are removed, damaged or become diseased within five years of completion of the landscaping shall be replaced within the following year with others of a similar size and species.
10. That notwithstanding the terms of condition 8 above, all soft and hard landscaping shall be completed and all approved fences erected prior to the school being brought back into use.
11. That the outdoor sports pitches shall not be in use outwith the hours of 8am to 9pm Mondays to Fridays, and 8am to 6pm at weekends.
12. That all surface water drainage from the site shall be treated in accordance with the principles of the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Manual (C697) (CIRIA 2007). Before development commences, details of the maintenance regime for the water detention areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
13. That the floodlights hereby permitted shall be baffled in order that the threshold vertical luminance at the nearest residential property does not exceed 5 lux.

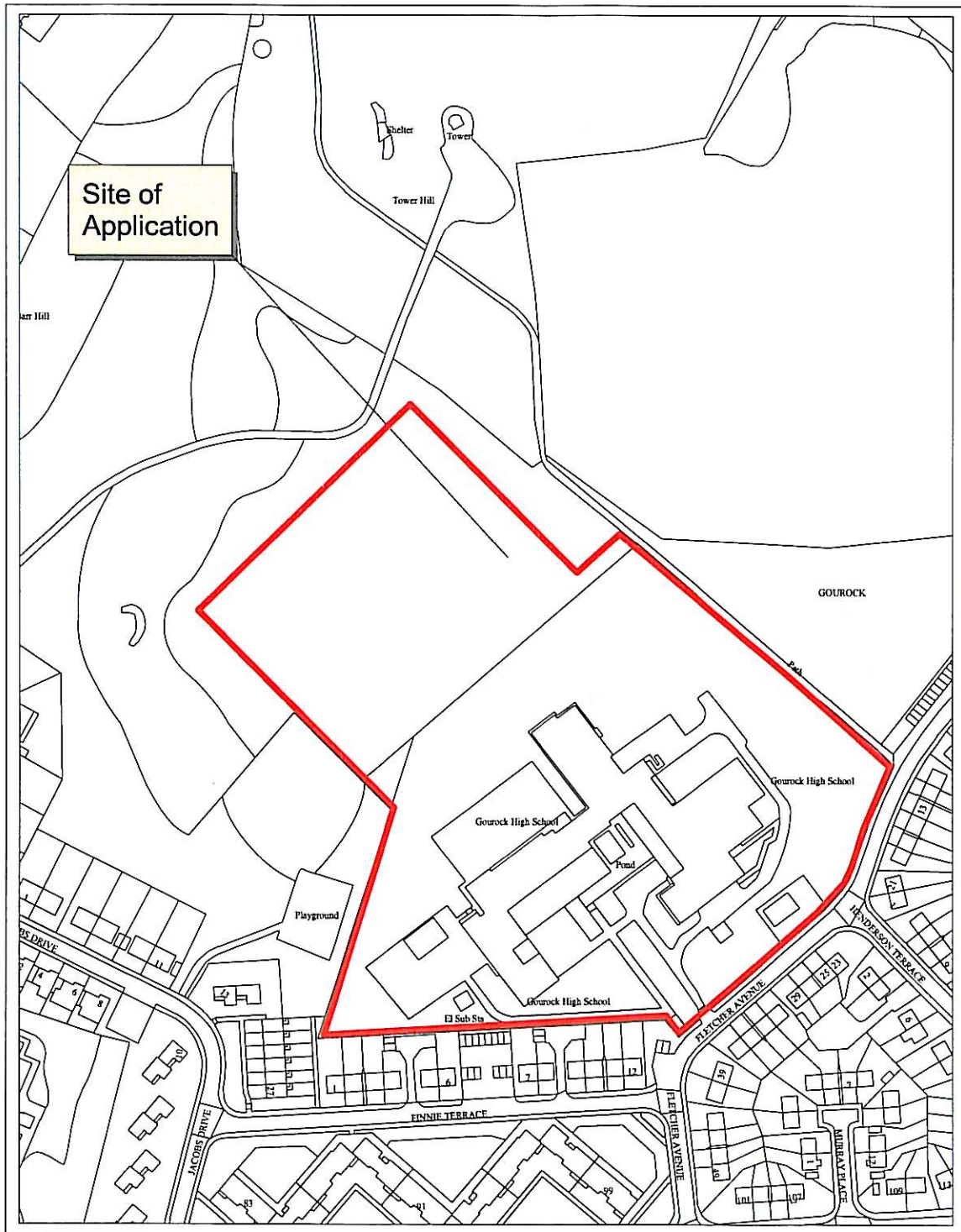
Reasons

1. To comply with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
2. To help arrest the spread of Japanese Knotweed in the interests of environmental protection.
3. To satisfactorily address potential contamination issues in the interests of environmental safety.
4. To provide verification that remediation has been carried out to the Authority's satisfaction
5. To ensure that all contamination issues are recorded and dealt with appropriately.
6. To protect receptors from the harmful effects of imported contamination.
7. To ensure the suitability of the colour and fabric of materials.
8. To ensure the adequacy of implementation of the landscaping scheme.
9. To ensure the retention of the approved planting scheme in the interests of visual amenity.
10. In the interests of public safety.
11. In the interests of residential amenity.
12. To control runoff from the site to reduce the risk of flooding.
13. In the interests of residential amenity.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plans
2. Applicant's supporting information
3. Inverclyde Local Plan
4. Consultee responses
5. Letters of objection



Drawing No. 11/0066/IC former Gourock High School

Drawn by: JML

Date: 06:05:11

