

---

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>The Planning Board</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1st February 2012</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Regeneration and Planning</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>11/0019/IC Plan 02/12</b>
			<b>Local Application Development</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>David Ashman</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 712416</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Formation of car park and boat marshalling area at Royal Gourock Yacht Club, Ashton Road, Gourock.</b>		

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The application site consists of approximately 0.29 hectares of ground to the west of the Royal Gourock Yacht Club on Ashton Road, Gourock. It incorporates tidal foreshore, developed ground associated with the Yacht Club and part of a small strip of amenity open space adjacent to Ashton Road. There are level changes within the site with ground stepping up from the foreshore to Ashton Road. The road sits at approximately 7 metres above sea level.

The application site is separated from the footway on Ashton Road by a grass verge of approximately 7.5 metres minimum width. Across Ashton Road there are several residential properties of varying height and design. The Yacht Club is located to the east while amenity open space continues to the west.

## **PROPOSAL**

The applicant seeks planning permission to construct a car park and boat marshalling area together covering a foreshore length of approximately 120 metres (at its longest point) and a width of approximately 32 metres. The plans show the provision of 45 car parking spaces and a boat marshalling area of 9 metres by 27 metres. The area is to be finished with an aggregate granular surface. A 5 metres wide vehicular access is to be formed at the western end of the site. This will cross over a strategic cycle route and core path. Boats would be carried into the water via a ramp.

The plans indicate that the level of the car park will be approximately 2 metres below the level of Ashton Road. This step down from road level will generally align with the existing steep bank although the applicant intends to use rock armour and gabion baskets to support the ground above where required. Rock armour is also to be used to support the car park and provide a sea defence on the foreshore side of the site. Entry to and egress from the car park is to be achieved via a 1:16 gradient access. The plans also show existing and proposed new planting between the site and the footway on Ashton Road although this is outwith the application site and outwith the applicant's control.

The proposal would involve changing levels, particularly on the foreshore side. The section plans indicate that the raising of ground level would be achieved through the use of granular fill material.

The applicant, in a covering letter, has indicated that the purpose of the application is to build on renewed interest in the Yacht Club as a recreational facility by encouraging sailors of small craft to access the water. It will allow major dinghy events to be run from the Club. It is stated that there are no facilities to allow this to take place at present and if local children are to be encouraged into the sport then such a facility is crucial. The proposed platform would act as a marshalling/start area for such sailing events. At other times it would be used by club members and guests for parking at normal club sailing or social events. It is pointed out that this would help alleviate on-street parking difficulties experienced by local residents. Entry to the car park is not to be controlled and it would therefore be available for general parking outwith club member use.

The application has been supported by an Environmental Statement. Several conclusions are reached by the study including that there would be no significant impact on flora and fauna, that there are no protected species affected, that the greater part of the car park will be screened from Ashton Road users, that the rock armour will assist coastal protection from stormy weather, and that the facility will be of community benefit.

## **LOCAL PLAN POLICIES**

### 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 LR6 - Inverclyde Access Strategy

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to protect and promote the 'core path network' (both existing and proposed) and the other key themes of the adopted Inverclyde Access Strategy, where these do not conflict with other Local Plan policies, in particular DS8 and DS10.

### Local Plan Policy LR7 - Strategic Route: Glasgow to Inverclyde

Inverclyde Council supports and will protect the strategic Glasgow to Inverclyde Route. Proposed extensions to this route to enhance the 'core path network' will be supported, taking into account potential conflicts of users and land uses. An alternative route will be secured in the event of the reopening of the Glasgow Central-Bridge of Weir-Kilmacolm railway line, which formerly occupied part of this strategic route.

### Local Plan Policy DS6 - Promotion of a Sympathetic Approach to Enhance the Environment of the Coastline

The riparian environment and scenic setting of Inverclyde's developed and undeveloped coastline will be safeguarded by promoting development only where adequate and sustainable sea defences are included in the proposal and where it will enhance, and not detract from, this unique asset.

### Local Plan Policy UT4 - Reducing Flood Risk

Inverclyde Council will seek to reduce the risk of the flooding of non-agricultural areas by resisting development on functional flood plains. Where development is proposed for an area considered to be at risk from flooding, the Council will:

- (a) require the preparation of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA);
- (b) seek the incorporation of flood prevention measures able to cope with, as a minimum, a 1 in 200 year rainfall event, depending on the type of development proposed, taking into consideration predicted climate change and sea level changes in the period to 2050, or justification as to why this standard of protection is not required;
- (c) consult with SEPA where development is likely to result in a material increase in the number of buildings at risk from flooding; and
- (d) require Clyde waterfront and coastal development to be protected against coastal flooding to a level of 5 metres above the ordnance datum.

Flood prevention measures and sea defences should not increase the risk flooding elsewhere or have an adverse impact on the natural or built environment. For planning permission to be granted, the Council will require agreement to be reached in respect of the continual maintenance of flood prevention infrastructure and sea defences associated with the proposed development

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Head Of Environmental And Commercial Services** - Crash barriers should be erected down the access ramp and across the car park to stop vehicles rolling into the sea. A sign should be erected warning vehicles exiting the car park that they are crossing a cycle track and should give way to cyclists. The access ramp should be paved to prevent deleterious material being carried onto the road. Access should be taken via a footway crossing formed in accordance with the Council's Roads Development Guide. Drainage details and treatment of surface water should be submitted for approval.

**Head Of Safer And Inclusive Communities** - No objection subject to the imposition of conditions in respect of Japanese Knotweed, investigation of possible site contamination, and controls on external lighting. A series of advisory notes in respect of drainage and construction issues is also suggested.

**Scottish Environment Protection Agency West** - No objection.

**Scottish Natural Heritage** - No objections, although adequate alternative access routes should be provided if the cycle route and core path are blocked and Black Guillemot nest boxes should be incorporated into the design of the scheme.

**Scottish Government** - No observations in relation to air quality and noise issues.

**Scottish Water** - No objection.

**Scottish Gas Networks** - Information is provided on the location of plant in the vicinity. Minimum distances from plant for excavations are suggested.

## **PUBLICITY**

The application was the subject of neighbour notification and was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 30th September 2011 due to the environmental impact assessment, as development affecting the setting of a Listed Building and as there are no premises on neighbouring land. The application was also advertised in the Edinburgh Gazette on 30th September 2011 due to the environmental impact assessment.

## **SITE NOTICES**

A site notice was posted on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 for Development Affecting a Listed Building.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

24 representations have been submitted, 22 of which are objections and 2 of which are in support. The points of objection may be summarised as follows:

### **Policy issues**

- The proposal is contrary to policy LR1 of the Local Plan as it will not protect open space

### Impact on the natural environment

- This is an area appreciated for its natural environment by walkers, joggers, cyclists and users of the foreshore. What is proposed would be detrimental to that environment.
- Inadequacy of assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposal, especially disturbance of habitat and displacement of wildlife, not all of which has been recognised in the assessment.
- It will not be possible to screen the car park with immediate effect.
- Significance of visual impacts from the river have been underplayed.
- Impact on views to and from the Yacht Club as a "B" listed building.
- Detrimental impact on views across the Clyde.
- Details of the proposed planting have not been provided.

### Car parking

- There are already ample parking opportunities.
- As Ashton Road has become much busier following closure of the Calmac ferry terminal, the formation of a new access onto it will be detrimental to traffic safety.
- Loss of on-street car parking opportunities for residents with the formation of the car park access.
- The proposed gravel top surface to the car park will be susceptible to storm damage and require continuous repair. It will have the appearance of continually looking unfinished.

### Social issues

- Noise levels from construction would adversely impact on nightshift workers.
- The proposal is not for general community benefit.
- Concerns over litter.
- The construction programme may be spread over a long period causing extended disruption to the detriment of residential amenity.
- Fears of loitering when the car park is not in use.
- Devaluation of adjacent properties.

### Recreational impacts

- Displacement of existing scuba diving from the existing slip.
- Adverse impact on access to the beach.

### Procedural issues

- There has not been adequate consultation by the Council on this application.

The points of support may be summarised as follows:

- The proposal will free up on-street parking opportunities for residents when club functions are on.

- Gourock needs developments which will benefit the local community and bring in tourists.

## **ASSESSMENT**

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

Planning control only relates to those elements of the application that are land based. In this respect, the landward part of the proposed development is within an area identified through the Local Plan as being protected open space under policy LR1. Through this policy the Council undertakes to support, safeguard and where practicable, enhance the area. The key consideration, therefore, is whether the proposal will achieve these aims. There is also a clear link to policy DS6 which requires the riparian environment and scenic setting of Inverclyde's coastline to be safeguarded by promoting development only where adequate and sustainable sea defences are included in the proposal and where it will enhance, and not detract from, this unique asset.

Objectors have raised concern over the impact on the setting of Gourock when viewed from the River. Set within the wider vista and positioned below road level, I do not consider this impact merits refusal of planning permission in its own right. Similarly, SNH consider the impact on wildlife, flora and fauna to be acceptable. Nevertheless, having considered the submitted information and assessed the impact of the proposal on site I am satisfied that the above policy aims will not be served by the proposed development. The site is highly visible to walkers, joggers and cyclists using the adjacent footway. I note that under policy LR6 it forms part of the core path network and under policy LR7 is part of the strategic cycle route network. It is a route of great importance to recreational interest. Either side of the Yacht Club views open out across the Clyde. Although part of the application site consists of previously developed land I am satisfied that the greater part of the site is more natural in character. The introduction of a substantial man made platform designed for parking of cars and boats would be an unwelcome visual intrusion into an otherwise mainly natural environment and would be to the detriment of not only neighbouring residential properties but users of the footpath and cycle route. I note that the applicant has indicated an intention to introduce soft landscaping to attempt to screen the car park from street level. This land is not within the applicant's control and it is therefore not certain that such screening provision could be made. In order to attempt to screen the car park the landscaping would have to be of significant height and density. Such an approach would create an unexpected detraction from the open views presently experienced on this side of the Yacht Club.

The impact of the proposed development on the setting of the Yacht Club as a listed building is a material planning consideration. The principal view would be on approach from the west along Ashton Road. The car park would be visible and, more particularly when it is in use by cars and boats, will have the potential to form a detrimental setting for the western elevation of the building. Indeed, it is the impact on the setting of the Yacht Club, views and the outlook from Ashton Road that are crucial to my assessment. This stretch of foreshore is a fantastic asset to Inverclyde.

I note that policy LR1 allows for encouragement of other relevant and compatible development for the purposes of leisure, recreation and sport. Although it may be considered that the car park will be supportive of the sporting use of the facilities the policy also states that such encouragement only applies where it is appropriate. A balance requires to be reached between the desire to maximise water based leisure pursuits and the high quality of visual amenity enjoyed by residents of and visitors to the town. I am not convinced that the provision of additional off street car parking with the consequential disruption to views and setting should take precedent.

On this basis I consider that the proposed development is contrary to the aims of policies LR1, LR6, LR7 and DS6. In view of this conclusion assessment against policy UT4 is not necessary. It remains to be considered if there are any material considerations which suggest that there are other reasons for refusal of the application or, indeed for suggesting that a departure from the Local Plan may be considered. In addition to issues previously addressed in this report, objection letters

have noted concerns relating to traffic safety, design details, social issues, recreational impacts and procedure.

On the matter of traffic safety I note that the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services expresses no concern over traffic movements. Comments are restricted to the safe operation of the site and the connection to the public road. Conditions may be attached to a planning permission to address these concerns and the application would not, therefore, merit refusal on this basis.

The appearance of the car park and, in particular, the absence of a final sealed surface is a material consideration. Provided that it is properly maintained and that there is an adequate sealed surface close to the connection with the public road, to prevent deleterious materials being carried onto the carriageway, then there is no objection in principle to a granular surface finish to the car park. Maintenance requirements could be addressed by a condition on a grant of planning permission. Although details of the proposed planting have not been provided, should planning permission be granted a condition could be attached to address this matter.

Noise levels during the construction phase, especially when set against the background of general traffic noise, and concerns over the potential for litter are not a reason alone for the refusal of the proposed development. Similarly, it is not for the planning process to insist that construction programmes be completed quickly.

I do not consider that concerns over litter and loitering associated with this facility merits refusal. Similarly, concerns over the devaluation of properties, the displacement of scuba diving and whether or not the facility is for private gain are not a basis for refusing planning permission.

I acknowledge that part of the beach would be lost as a result of the proposed development but, within the context of the extent of the waterfront that remains accessible I consider this does not justify refusal.

Finally, consultation and notification of neighbours has been undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements.

Having considered all the material considerations relevant to the application, I find that there are none that suggest a departure from the Local Plan is justified and I conclude that planning permission should be refused.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the application be refused.

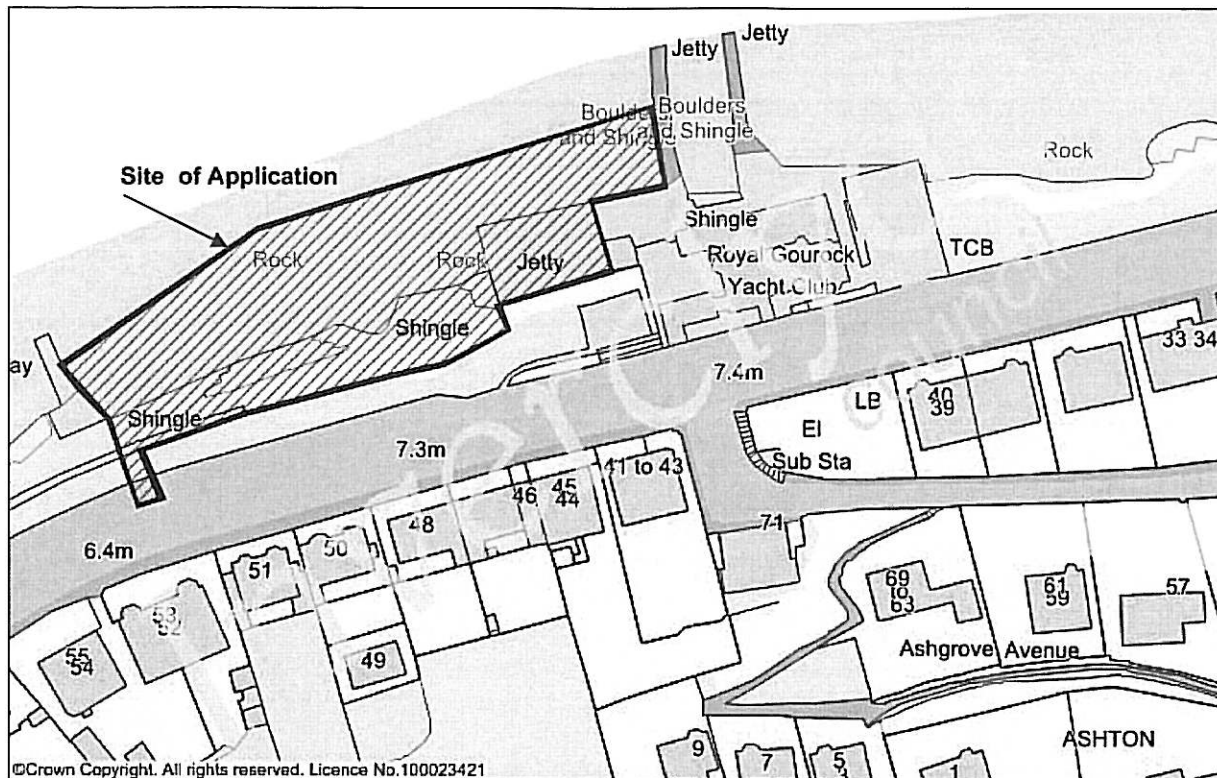
### Reasons

1. The proposed development is contrary to the aims of policies LR1, LR6, LR7 and DS6 in that the construction of the car park and boat marshalling area would be a detrimental visual intrusion into an otherwise mainly natural environment, which would not support, safeguard or enhance the designated open space, core path or strategic cycle route and would be detrimental to the environment of the coastline.
2. The car park and boat marshalling area has the potential to form a detrimental setting for the C(S) Listed Royal Gourock Yacht Club building.

Stuart Jamieson  
Head of Regeneration and Planning

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plans.
2. Applicant's supporting information.
3. Inverclyde Local Plan.
4. Historic Scotland's Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes.
5. Consultation replies.
6. Letters of representation.



Application Number	11/0019/IC
Location	Royal Gourock Yacht Club Ashton Road Gourock PA19 1DA
Proposal	Formation of car park and boat marshalling area



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved  
(1000023421) 2010

Inverclyde  
council  
regeneration and planning