

Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	6th June 2012
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	11/0019/IC Plan 06/12
			Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	David Ashman	Contact No:	01475 712416
Subject:	Formation of car park and boat marshalling area at Royal Gourock Yacht Club, Ashton Road, Gourock.		

BACKGROUND

In 2008 a planning application was submitted for a car park and boat marshalling area at the Royal Gourock Yacht Club (08/0124/IC). Neighbours were notified of this application. The proposal was amended, resulting in its withdrawal and the submission of a new application (11/0019/IC). Once again, the neighbours were notified. A report recommending refusal of planning permission was considered by the Planning Board on 1 February 2012. The Board considered it necessary to undertake a site visit prior to determining the application. Prior to the site visit, officers and representatives of the Yacht Club met, after which the Club submitted a reduced proposal. Members and officers undertook a site visit on 8 March at which the differences between the original and reduced proposal were highlighted. Following receipt of the reduced proposal, the application was again notified to neighbours and plans were posted on the Council's ePlanning site.



SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is approximately 0.29 hectares of ground immediately to the west of the Royal Gourock Yacht Club. It incorporates tidal foreshore, developed ground associated with the Yacht Club and part of a small strip of 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 approximately 7 metres above sea level.

The 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 residential properties of varying height and design.

PROPOSAL

The applicant seeks planning permission to construct a car park/boat marshalling area approximately 32 metres wide and extending approximately 95 metres along the foreshore. The plans show the provision of an aggregate granular surfaced development platform which is designed to have a dual use as a boat marshalling area and a 30 space car park. A 5 metres wide vehicular access is to be formed at the western end. This will cross over a strategic cycle route and core path. Boats would have wheeled access to the existing slipway.

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 re-grade the bank where required. Rock armour is 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 1:12 gradient access. The plans also indicate that the raising of ground level would be achieved through the use of granular fill material with existing and proposed planting between the site and the footway on Ashton Road.

The applicant has indicated that the application is to build on renewed interest in the Yacht Club as a recreational facility. It will allow major dinghy events to be run from the Club. There are no facilities to allow this to take place at present and this facility is seen as crucial to encouraging local children. The proposed platform would primarily 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. The Club consider that this will help alleviate on-street parking difficulties experienced by local residents. Entry to the car park is not to be controlled and it would be available for general parking outwith club member use.

The application has been supported by an Environmental Statement. The study indicates that there will 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. SEPA's acceptance of the surfacing, with respect to drainage, should be confirmed prior to development starting on site. 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. Relocation of the bus stop is agreed in principle but the detailed location will require to be agreed.

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 objection to the current proposal, particularly as the site does not include habitat that would support protected areas of rest/shelter for the local otter population, but advise that adequate alternative recreational access routes should be provided by the developers if they require to temporarily or permanently block any existing routes - such as the National Cycle Route 75 or Core Path 1D - and also that SNH would support the advice previously given by Inverclyde Council's then Biodiversity Officer that any opportunities to incorporate black guillemot nest boxes into the design of the development should be investigated in the interests of furthering the conservation of biodiversity.

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 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 due to the environmental impact assessment.

SITE NOTICES

A site notice was posted for Development Affecting a Listed Building.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

39 representations were submitted in respect of application 08/0124/IC. 4 were in support of the proposal and 35 were objections. 26 representations were received in response to the revised application 11/0019/IC, 2 of which were in support of the application with the remaining 24 opposing it. Following notification of the reduced scheme a further 48 representations were received, consisting of 9 objections, 38 letters in support and another taking a neutral stance. 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 and traffic issues

- 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/neighbour notification by the Council on this application.

The points of support may be summarised as follows:

- The car park will be an asset to residents in the surrounding area providing parking opportunities and reducing congestion.
- Gourock needs developments which will benefit the local community and bring in tourists.
- The proposal is necessary to promote growth in sailing.
- This will improve the appearance of the shoreline.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations remain 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 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. Accordingly the key consideration 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 concerns over the impact on the setting of Gourock when viewed from the River. In my previous report I did not consider that this impact merited refusal of planning permission; this remains the case. Similarly, SNH consider the impact on wildlife, flora and fauna to be acceptable. Having considered the submitted information and assessed the impact of the revised proposal on site I am satisfied that the above policy aims will not be compromised 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. Part of the application site consists of previously developed land; the remainder takes its natural form. Compared with the previous larger proposal I am satisfied that the area of undeveloped ground that would be lost as a result of the proposal has been significantly reduced. It is acknowledged that the introduction of a substantial man made platform designed for parking of cars and boats represents a change to the local environment but this is now largely concentrated on land that has previously been developed, is situated relatively lower to street level and, therefore, has less visibility than previously proposed. 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 within the Council's control and some planting may be given consideration albeit that the positioning, species mix and height will need to be controlled to allow a balance between softening the appearance of the car park and protecting views across the river.

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/marshalling yard would be visible, particularly when it is in use by cars and boats. However, I am satisfied that the reduced scale of the development is such that the impact on the setting of the Yacht Club does not merit refusal of planning permission.

I note that policy LR1 allows for the encouragement of other relevant and compatible development for the purposes of leisure, recreation and sport. The car park/marshalling area will be supportive of the sporting use of the facilities and, compared with the previous proposal, I consider that a balance has been reached between the desire to maximise water based leisure pursuits and that to retain the high quality of visual amenity enjoyed by residents and visitors.

On this basis I consider that the proposed development may be supported with reference to the aims of policies LR1, LR6, LR7 and DS6. With respect to policy UT4, I note that SEPA has not raised any objections to the proposal.

I consider that the revised proposal accords with the Local Plan. It remains to be assessed if there are any material considerations which suggest that planning permission should not be granted. 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, a condition may 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 conclude that planning permission should be granted, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant, subject to the following conditions:

1. That full details and/or samples of the granular surface and the revetment materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to their use.
2. That prior to the commencement of construction, the applicant shall submit for the approval of the Planning Authority, SEPA's acceptance of the materials to be used in the construction of the car park/boat marshalling area.
3. 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.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. That prior to the car park/boat marshalling area hereby permitted being brought into use, crash barriers of a specification to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, shall be erected as directed by the Planning Authority.
7. That prior to the car park/boat marshalling area being brought into use a sign, the details of which are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, shall be erected to warn drivers leaving the car park that they are crossing a cycle track and should give way to cyclists.
8. That prior to the car park/boat marshalling area being brought into use, the access ramp shall be surfaced in a hard surface, the details of which are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
9. That prior to the commencement of development, a scheme showing provision for the existing National Cycle Route to remain open during the construction process shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The scheme shall, thereafter, remain in force until the completion of construction.
10. That prior to the commencement of development, full drainage details and details of the treatment of surface water shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
11. 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 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority of the maintenance regime for the water detention areas.
12. That prior to the commencement of development, details of the proposed planting on the verge between the application site and Ashton Road shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The planting shall thereafter be carried out during the first planting season following the commencement of construction of the car park/boat marshalling area.
13. That any of the planting approved in condition 11 above that dies, becomes diseased, is damaged or removed within 5 years of the date of planting shall be replaced within the first following planting season with others of a similar size and species.
14. That any clearance of vegetation within the application site shall take place outwith the bird breeding season of mid-March to mid-August.

Reasons

1. To assess the suitability of these materials.
2. To confirm SEPA's acceptance of drainage and possible leaking of contaminants.
3. To help arrest the potential spread of Japanese Knotweed in the interests of environmental protection.
4. To ensure that all contamination issues are recorded and dealt with appropriately.
5. To protect receptors from the harmful effects of imported contamination.
6. In the interests of driver safety.
7. In the interests of the safety of cyclists.
8. To prevent deleterious material being carried onto the carriageway.
9. To ensure continuity of access for users of the National Cycle Route.
10. To help to prevent flooding and possible contamination of the river.
11. To control runoff from the site to reduce the risk of flooding.
12. To ensure the suitability of the planting and secure its provision.
13. To ensure retention of the approved landscaping scheme.
14. In the interests of ecology.

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.



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