
Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	4th September 2013
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	13/0178/IC Plan 09/13
			Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	Guy Phillips	Contact No:	01475 712422
Subject:	Alteration and extension to existing primary school, formation of new teaching facilities and gymnasium / assembly hall, and the provision of external play surfaces (MUGA) at Ardgowan Primary School, Newton Street, Greenock		

SITE DESCRIPTION

Ardgowan Primary School is located on Newton Street and is within the Greenock West End Conservation Area. Dating from the early 20th century and built over 3 storeys, it is finished in red sandstone with a natural slate roof. The site is approximately 2.5m below street level at Newton Street, the drop being protected by railings along the heel of the footpath. Entrances to the building are at street level on the side elevations, each accessed by bridges extending from the heel of the footpath.



The school playground is to the rear and is accessed by stairs from the building entrances. The playground slopes down from the rear of the school building to the rear garden boundaries of houses and flats on Finnart Street, defined by approximately 1m high brick walling extended by 5m

high ball stop fencing. Within the playground is a temporary classroom building set back approximately 3m from the rear boundary of the houses on Campbell Street and approximately 2m from the rear gardens of houses on Finnart Street. To the west the site is bound by the rear parking court of a three storey block of flats at the junction of Newton Street and by the rear gardens of two semi-detached houses. To the east is a three storey, flatted building. Facing the school across Newton Street is a mix of two storey houses and flats.

PROPOSAL

The rear, north-west corner of the three storey building, extending to approximately 84 square metres, and the temporary classroom in the rear playground are both to be removed. These accommodate offices, toilets, relaxation and music rooms, stores and a staff room.

It is proposed to re-construct in this part of the site, extending the building footprint to within 2m and 6m of the rear garden boundaries of houses on Campbell Street and Finnart Street respectively. This will accommodate at lower ground floor a gymnasium, associated changing facilities, storage, toilets and plant room, at street level service, storage, toilet and reception and at upper floor level a meeting room, storage, service and toilet accommodation. Externally, the proposed wall finish is a terracotta tile cladding system, similar in hues to the reds of the existing sandstone. Roofs are monopitch with an aluminium standing seam finish.

Alterations are also proposed to the rear playground. At its north-east corner and contained by a 5m high mesh fence, is an approximately 120 square metre multi use games area (MUGA). Along the boundary with the rear gardens of the Finnart Street properties it is proposed to erect a 3m high anti-climb wire mesh fence and low hedging to replace the existing ball stop fence. On the side boundaries existing brick walling and ball stop fencing is to be retained and refurbished. Also proposed within the playground are a growing garden, raised social space, performance stage, a short running track and seating. There are flexible membrane canopies over the social space and performance stage. A bin store is proposed at the main entrance from Newton Street.

In support of the application a bat survey has been submitted with the planning application concluding that the main school building has a low bat roost potential and that the temporary classroom has negligible bat roost potential.

DEVELOPMENT 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 HR1 - Designated Environmental Resources and Built Heritage

Development that would adversely affect, directly or indirectly, the natural or built heritage resources listed in Schedule 9.1 and where indicated, on the Proposals Map, will not normally be permitted.

Having regard to the designation of the environmental resource and built heritage, exceptions will only be made where:

- (a) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not be compromised;
- (b) visual amenity and townscape will not be compromised;
- (c) no other site, identified in the Local Plan as suitable, is available;
- (d) the social and economic benefits of the scheme outweigh the total or partial loss of the environmental resource;

- (e) the developer has demonstrated that the impact of the development on the environment will be minimised; and
- (f) the loss can be compensated by habitat creation/site enhancement elsewhere, and where there are satisfactory arrangements to achieve this.

Local Plan Policy HR11 - Development Within and Adjacent to Conservation Areas

Development proposals both within and adjacent to conservation areas will be acceptable where they are sympathetic to the existing character, pattern of development and appearance of the area and the following matters are satisfactorily addressed, as appropriate:

- (a) siting and orientation of new buildings;
- (b) overall design and style;
- (c) scale of building, extension or alteration;
- (d) design details;
- (e) finishing materials; and
- (f) landscaping and boundary materials.

Local Plan Policy HR12 - Impact of Development Within Conservation Areas

When assessing Conservation Area development proposals (both within and adjacent to it) consideration will be given to the impact they will have on townscape and the wider landscape, especially when viewed from adjacent transport routes and vantage points accessible to the public.

PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Policy RES1 - Safeguarding the Character and Amenity of Residential Areas

The character and amenity of residential areas, identified on the Proposals Map, will be safeguarded and where practicable, enhanced. Proposals for new residential development will be assessed against and have to satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) compatibility with the character and amenity of the area;
- (b) details of proposals for landscaping;
- (c) proposals for the retention of existing landscape or townscape features of value on the site;
- (d) accordance with the Council's adopted roads guidance and Designing Streets, the Scottish Government's policy statement;
- (e) provision of adequate services; and
- (f) having regard to Supplementary Guidance on Planning Application Advice Notes.

Policy HER1 - Development which Affects the Character of Conservation Areas

Development proposals which affect conservation areas will be acceptable where they are sympathetic to the character, pattern of development and appearance of the area. Such proposals will be assessed having regard to Historic Scotland's SHEP and 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment' guidance note series.

CONSULTATIONS

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services - No objections, however no off road parking for staff or provision for buses has been provided.

Network Rail - No objections.

Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities - No objections subject to conditions to control potential ground contamination and noise from the Multi Use Games Area and advisory notes on

waste storage, external lighting, construction noise, CDM Regulations, food safety and health and safety.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph as a development affecting a conservation area.

SITE NOTICES

A site notice was posted as a development affecting a conservation area.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Written representations have been received from two neighbours, expressing concern that:

- There is currently anti-social behaviour in the rear playground when the school is closed.
- The proposed boundary fencing is lower than that existing, decreasing security and creating potential for increased nuisance for neighbours.
- Construction works may cause subsidence in neighbouring properties.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the determination of this planning application are the Local Plan, the proposed Local Development Plan, Historic Scotland's Scottish Historic Environment Policy and Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance note, the consultation responses and the written representations.

Policy H1 of the Local Plan and policy RES1 of the proposed Local Development Plan combine to seek to safeguard residential amenity and character. Potential impacts upon residential amenity and character arise from the scale and design of the proposed extension, shading, boundary treatment and the hours of use of the proposed MUGA.



I consider that the approximately 7.7m high gymnasium has the greatest potential to impact upon neighbours. It is, however, subservient to the existing school building and the location in the rear playground limits the potential impact is greatest on the rear gardens of the two adjoining semi-detached houses on Campbell Street and two properties on Finnart Street. The extension itself is of modern design, however, I consider its overall form and finishes to have an acceptable impact on neighbours, using colours to blend. The proposed fencing regime around the playground and

MUGA is, I consider, an improvement upon the appearance of the existing ball stop fencing which is in poor condition. It is designed to be difficult to climb, thus assisting in preventing unauthorised access into adjoining gardens identified by neighbours as being of concern. Additionally, CCTV coverage is to be provided to monitor the use of the playground and MUGA and as a result of the proposed extension there shall no longer be two routes in an out of the play ground from Newton Street. The remaining access is gated and lockable, as is the MUGA. I am, therefore, satisfied that use of the playground and MUGA outwith school hours can be managed and satisfactorily addresses the security and privacy concerns raised by objectors. I also am in agreement with the Head of Safer & Inclusive Communities who recommends that the hours of operation of the MUGA should be limited by condition to prevent noise nuisance to neighbours.



Moving on from the impact on immediate neighbours, the wider issues of townscape and impact on the Greenock West End Conservation Area require to be considered with reference to Local Plan policies HR1, HR11 and HR12 and proposed Local Development Plan policy HER1; these policies combine to seek to protect townscape within the Conservation Area by ensuring that development is sympathetic to its character, pattern of development and appearance with particular reference to views from adjacent transport routes and public vantage points. The proposal also requires to be assessed against Historic Scotland's Scottish Historic Environment Policy and Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance note; these advise that the protection of the historic environment is not about preventing change. Change should be managed intelligently and with understanding.

Extensions must protect the character and appearance of the building, be of subordinate scale and form located on a secondary elevation and designed in a high-quality manner using appropriate materials. As the site is below street level on Newton Street, the impact on townscape and public views of the ground level of the extension, incorporating the rear gymnasium, are significantly reduced. Impact is further reduced by the upper levels of the extension being set back from the street frontage. The extension is a partial replacement of the existing building, further reducing the overall impact of scale and massing. While the proposed design of this subordinate extension is clearly identifiable as modern, I consider its form adds quality to the existing school by placing an increased and improved emphasis upon its main entrance on the west (side) elevation. The choice of a terracotta tiled walled finish is complementary to the red sandstone of the existing building. I consider the extension to be sympathetic to the traditional design of the school and surrounding townscape and that the impact upon the Conservation Area is positive.

Overall, I consider that the proposal safeguards residential amenity and character in accordance with Local Plan Policy H1 and proposed Local development Plan Policy RES1, and protects

townscape within the Greenock West End Conservation Area in accordance with Local Plan Policies HR1, HR11 and HR12 and proposed Local Development Plan Policy HER1.

The consultation responses present no impediment to development; there are no objections from Network Rail regarding impact on the railway tunnel below Newton Street, the Head of Environmental & Commercial Services while highlighting that that as present off-street parking provision for staff and buses cannot be accommodated, does not object on road safety grounds.

While I note representations submitted on methods of construction and potential subsidence, these are not matters material to the determination of the planning application.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The presence of any ground contamination that becomes evident during site works shall be brought to the attention of the Planning Authority within one week. Consequential remediation work shall not be implemented unless a report has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Planning Authority.
2. No fill or landscaping material shall be imported onto the site until written details of the source and intended reuse of the imported materials has been submitted for approval, in writing, by the Planning Authority. The report shall characterise the chemical quality (including soil-leachate and organic content etc), volume and source of the imported materials with corresponding cross-sections and plans indicating spatial distribution and depth/thickness of material placement within the development site. The material from the source agreed only shall be imported in strict accordance with these agreed details.
3. The use of the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) is limited to between 9am and 9pm daily.
4. No development shall commence until samples of all external materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority: development thereafter shall proceed utilising the approved materials, unless the Planning Authority gives its prior written approval to any alternatives.
5. The CCTV cameras shall be positioned to restrict their line of sight to within the grounds of the school only.

Reasons

1. To ensure that all contamination issues are recorded and dealt with appropriately.
2. To protect receptors from the harmful effects of imported contamination.
3. To protect the amenities of occupiers of premises from unreasonable noise and vibration levels.
4. To ensure a continuity of materials in this part of the Greenock West End Conservation Area.
5. To protect the privacy of adjacent property.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plans.
2. Inverclyde Local Plan
3. Proposed Inverclyde Local Development Plan
4. Historic Scotland's Scottish Historic environment Policy
5. Historic Scotland's Managing Change In The Historic Environment
6. Consultation responses
7. Written representations



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