

Application No: 14/2066M

Location: ST ALBANS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL, PRIORY LANE, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE, SK10 3HJ

Proposal: Improve the security fencing for the school boundary of the school

Applicant: Mrs T Cooke

Expiry Date: 23-Jun-2014

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION** Approve subject to conditions

**MAIN ISSUES**

Impact upon the character of the area  
Impact upon residential amenity

**Date Report Prepared** 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014

**REASON FOR REPORT**

Paragraph 2 (C) of the Council Constitution (September 2013) requires that planning applications, which involve the Council as a Landowner and receive objections should be considered by the Planning Committee.

It is understood that the Council owns part of the land in which this application relates a number of objections to the proposal have been received.

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site comprises St Albans RC Primary School and playing Fields.

The site is identified within the Local Plan as an existing area of Open Space. The surrounding land uses are predominantly residential and the site falls within the settlement area of Macclesfield Town.

**DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The proposal seeks full planning permission to replace existing fencing with weld mesh fencing varying from 1.5m to 2.4m in height and to incorporate pedestrian and vehicular access gates. The fencing is proposed in the following locations:

- 2.4m high fencing along the northern boundary of the site
- 2.1m high along the northern side of Keates Drive;
- 2.4m high fencing to the south of the site across the playing fields
- relocation of existing 1.5m high fencing to two locations within the curtilage of the existing school building.

## RELEVANT HISTORY

None relevant

## POLICIES

### National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework

### Local Plan Policy

BE1	Design Guidance
DC1	New Build
DC3	Residential Amenity
DC9	Tree Protection
DC6	Circulation and Access

## CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

**Police:** - No comments received at the time of writing this report. Responses will be provided in an update to Committee.

**Sport England** - No comments received at the time of writing this report. Responses will be provided in an update to Committee.

The Strategic Highways and Transport Manager- No objections

## OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Four representations have been received. Comments are available to view in full on the Council online planning system however; concerns raised in brief are as follows:

- *The fence will block out light, it also has the resemblance of a prison compound!;*
- *The fence will remove all views and cause the pathway between the house to resemble and underpass possible causing a concern for crime;*
- *The opposite end of the grounds for the school are having a 2 metre fence - why are we subjected to 3 metre?*
- *The proposal will devalue my property;*
- *The applicant proposes to relocate the boundary within the site and on the playing fields;*
- *The application appears to identify the redesignation of the from playing fields to school activity. Will school playing field remain?;*
- *The proposal will prevent wildlife from pass through the site;*
- *I believe the school is likely to close so why do they require the fencing;*
- *The height of the fencing will block light to our property;*
- *The proposed heavy duty mesh fence is excessive;*
- *Object to location of the proposed pedestrian access, should only be able to access the site form the main entrance. People currently park cars here an block me in and out of my property;*
- *Unaware of any serious security issues at the school;*

During the course of the application, amended plans reducing the height of a small section of the fencing have been received. Neighbouring properties have been re consulted Comment received will be reported to members in an update to Committee.

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

A Design & Access Statement was submitted with the planning application. A full copy is available to view on the application file.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principal of Development**

This application site is located within an existing urban area of Macclesfield Town. The National Planning Policy Framework set outs a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The main issues with the application therefore relate to whether the design of the proposed fencing is considered in be in keeping with the character of the area and whether the proposal will result in any amenity issues for the occupants of nearby neighbouring properties.

### **Policy**

The school and its playing fields are identified with the Macclesfield Local Plan as existing Open Space which is covered by Local Plan Policy RT1 (Open Space)

Policy RT1 seeks to ensure that areas of recreational land and open space will be protected from development. The applicant advises that the proposed fencing is required for the security purposes. The outer southern boundary of the site, which is bound by a woodland area, is not fully enclosed, as some sections of the fencing panels have collapsed or are missing. The Applicant advises that this has caused the School significant safeguarding issues, as the boundary cannot be monitored and it is claimed that trespassers are able to cut through the field and school grounds. It is advised that the cost of replacing the fencing along the existing boundary is too costly. The new fencing will allow the school to monitor and manage the safeguarding more closely, which is a requirement of Ofstead.

The applicant does not propose a change of use of the existing playing fields and the openness and integrity of the playing fields will be retained. The proposal is therefore considered to satisfy Policy RT1 of the Local Plan.

### **Design**

The works involve the erection of a close wired horizontal and vertical mesh patterned fencing polyester powder coated in a green colour.

Amended plans have been received reducing the proposed fencing along the northern boundary from a 3m in height to 2.4m. This fencing will replace an existing fencing, which varies from 3m, 2m and 1.5m in places and runs adjacent to existing apartments and garage blocks

Existing 1.5m high fencing, which runs parallel to the northern side of Keates Drive and to the western boundary, is to be replaced with 2.1m high weld mesh fencing. New automatic 2.4m high vehicle gates are to be sited at the school access which is to be connected to a an existing secure entry system.

The applicant proposes to re use existing 1.5m high fencing to re site it from an existing school building to the eastern boundary and a create a small area of fencing between two existing school buildings.

A new 2.4 m weld mesh fence is also proposed to be erected to the south of the school building within the playing fields and will run from the eastern boundary to the west.

The site is not located within a Conservation Area nor within the setting of a Listed Building. The proposed fencing, in most parts, will not be highly prominent or visible from a public vantage point.

Following concerns over the appearance and oppressive nature of a 3m high fence. The fencing proposed along the northern boundary of the site has been reduced from 3m to 2.4m and proposed fencing along Keates Avenue to 2.1m in height in order to ensure the proposal does not have an imposing impact. The amendments sought are now considered to be of a more appropriate height having regard to the nature of the site and the character of the surrounding area.

The type and height of the fencing proposed in terms of its design is not considered to be unusual having regard to the nature of the application site. The applicant has submitted a photograph of the type of fencing proposed, which is currently in situ at St Benedict's Catholic Primary School in Wilmslow.

The proposed fencing will be coated in a dark green colour and therefore will not be overly prominent. The proposed fencing therefore by virtue of its siting design and height will not be out of keeping with the character of the existing area and therefore satisfies policies DC1 and BE1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

### **Residential Amenity**

The proposed fencing is considered to be a sufficient distance from the neighbouring properties on Cornwall Close so as not to have an impact upon loss of light or an obtrusive overbearing impact.

The proposed fencing will replaces existing fencing and therefore the impact of which are unlikely to have greater or significant impact upon the residential amenity of adjacent residential properties.

The proposed development is considered to accord with Policy DC3 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

### **Forestry**

The Council Forestry Officer has been consulted on the application and advises that a limited amount of minor pruning will be required in order to facilitate the proposed fencing. This will involve the removal of epicomic growth, secondary and sub lateral branches only and can be expedited in accordance with a current best practice regulations without detracting from the mature trees surrounding the school. A planning condition tree/pruning specification is required to be submitted prior to the commencement of development. No development shall be carried out until the approved works have been agreed and carried out on site.

**Other Matters**

Members should be aware that the proposed fencing amounts to operational development. However if the proposed enclosure was to be reduced to 2m in height and does not sit adjacent to a highway, fencing could be constructed under permitted development rights.

**CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

The proposed development is considered to represent an appropriate form of development that will not be detrimental to the existing open space provision or trees. The proposed development is considered acceptable in term of design and siting and will have an acceptable impact on neighbouring amenity. The proposed development accords with relevant policies within the Development Plan.

Subject to comments from the Police, Sports England and representations a recommendation of approval is made subject to conditions.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Northern Area Manager has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Northern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

Should this application be the subject of an appeal, authority shall be delegated to the Northern Area Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Northern Planning Committee to enter into a planning agreement in accordance with the S106 Town and Country Planning Act to secure the Heads of Terms for a S106 Agreement.

## Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
2. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
3. A06EX - Materials as application
4. A04TR Tree Pruning/Felling Specification

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