



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2018

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLANNING

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 18/1142/08
(GH)

APPLICANT: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

DEVELOPMENT: Variation of condition 2 of planning consent 17/0695/08:
1. Revision of existing site entrance, 2. Repositioning of additional on-site car parking and drop off, 3. Repositioning of MUGA and gardening area, 4. Removal of proposed vehicular entrance from Graiglwyd and 5. Removal of proposed conversion of existing tarmacadam playground for parking and drop off.

LOCATION: MAESGWYN SPECIAL SCHOOL, CWMDARE ROAD, CWMDARE, ABERDARE, CF44 8RE

DATE REGISTERED: 15/10/2018

ELECTORAL DIVISION: Aberdare West/Llwydcoed

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

REASONS:

The proposed variation of condition, proposing revisions to the access and layout of the previously approved scheme (17/0695/08) is considered to be acceptable. The development would not have a harmful impact on the appearance of the site and surrounding area, and would be beneficial to neighbouring residents by relocating the vehicular entrance and access road away from Graiglwyd. Furthermore, the proposal would be acceptable in terms of highway safety.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The application has been submitted by the Council, relates to land and property within its ownership, where the Council's interest is of more than a minor nature.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Permission is sought to vary condition 2 of planning permission 17/0695/08, for the purposes of providing a revised scheme layout, at Maesgwyn Special School, Cwmdare Road, Cwmdare.

The extant consent, which was approved by Committee Members last year, permitted a new, additional vehicular access from Graiglwyd to the west. This access would have required a new carriageway to the western side of the School, where the tarmac playground would have been converted for use as a car park and secure drop-off point.

In addition, consent was also granted for a Multi Use Games Area within the grounds to the east, and a further revision to the existing front car park to provide more off-street parking.

As a result of the above the greenhouse, sheds, raised beds and other paraphernalia associated with the gardening area would have been relocated to northern part of the site and be accessed by a new path and DDA compliant ramps.

However, whilst it is still proposed to provide the same facilities at the School, consent is now sought to revise their arrangement within the site, with a variation to condition 2 to reflect updated plans.

The key change is that the Graiglwyd entrance would no longer be constructed. Instead the existing entrance would be improved with all car parking and the mini-bus/taxi drop-off point being to the front and eastern side.

A consequence of this is that the MUGA and gardening area would be repositioned further to the north, but the amenity space to the western side and tarmac playground would no longer be lost.

The application is accompanied by a design and access statement and detailed drawings for the management of surface water.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application property is Maesgwyn Special School, which occupies a site on the outskirts and to the north of Cwmdare and Aberdare, and encompasses an area of approximately 1.25ha.

Vehicular access to the site is currently gained directly from Cwmdare Road to the south, with the pupil drop-off entrance at Graiglwyd. The school comprises a main single storey building of late 1960's style and construction, together with a number of outbuildings of smaller scale, a playground, garden and field.

The school site is bounded by residential properties at Graiglwyd and Nantgwyn to the south and west, by the grounds of the former Coleg Y Cymoedd site to the east, and by open land to the north.

There is a general fall in level towards the east such that the school, as viewed from the housing development appears well-screened and has little visual impact on the street scene.

During the site visit it was noted that the majority of construction work for all aspects of the scheme was at an advanced stage.

PLANNING HISTORY

The most recent applications associated with this site are:

17/0695	Installation of a new dedicated access point and 4.8m wide carriageway connecting to the existing playground to the north of the site served by a vehicular crossover to the adopted highway on Graiglwyd, modifications and alterations to the existing front elevation car park to increase parking capacity and the installation of a new Multi Use Games Area to the north east of the site on the site of the existing sports field.	Granted 24/07/17
08/0352	Building of a greenhouse for vocational course in horticulture.	Granted 25/04/08
07/2148	Storage Container on School Site.	Granted 05/02/08
07/2141	Proposed construction of single storey workshop/skills training facility, with covered link to main school building.	Granted 05/02/08
06/1108	Section of land at the end of football field to be developed as an allotment, green palisade fencing 2.4m high inclusive of double gate	Withdraw 28/02/07
03/0961	Rear extension to rear area to form 2 No. Classrooms/community room.	Granted 08/08/03
00/4337	School grounds development project.	PDV 30/08/00
98/4156	Informal enquiry for a workshop.	PDV 02/04/19

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by direct notification to eighteen neighbouring properties, and notices were erected on site.

No letters of objection or representation have been received.

CONSULTATION

Highways and Transportation - no objection.

Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water - DC/WW has no objection to the variation of conditions and requests that any drainage conditions on the original consent are brought forward.

Sports Council for Wales - Sports Council Wales has noted that the new application will retain the hard surface playground and that although there is a loss of playing field area, it is prone to waterlogging. A substantial part of the field would be converted into a MUGA which would allow intense use. Sport Wales is satisfied therefore that the proposal will provide at least equivalent facilities and has no objection.

No other responses were received during the statutory consultation period.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Aberdare

Policy CS1 - promotes accessibility by securing investments in new roads and public transport movements including walking.

Policy AW5 - sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

Policy AW6 - requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

Policy AW10 - supports development where there is no unacceptable harm to health or amenity due to light pollution or public health and safety.

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements
- Design and Placemaking

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications, regard should also be given to the requirements of National Planning Policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where National Planning Policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 3 (Making and Enforcing Planning Decisions), Chapter 4 (Planning for Sustainability) and Chapter 11 (Tourism, Sport and Recreation) set out the Welsh Government's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of the application.

Other policy guidance considered:

PPW Technical Advice Note 12 - Design

PPW Technical Advice Note 16 - Sport, Recreation and Open Space

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main Issues:

Principle of the proposed development

On account of the School's specialist provision and the wider catchment area, the vast majority of pupils travel to school by taxi or minibus. However, the current car park at the front of the building is so small it cannot safely be used for vehicles to drop children off and turn around.

This situation has led to children being dropped off at the Graiglwyd pedestrian entrance and escorted into the school building, but has also resulted in a large number of vehicles arriving at more or less the same time and waiting in adjoining residential streets at the end of the school day.

This arrangement is unsatisfactory, and has not only led to a strain on the local infrastructure and tested the patience of residents, but caused a safeguarding issue where a pupil was dropped off without being escorted into the school and absconded.

The proposed changes to provide an improved vehicle entrance leading to a larger car park and designated drop off zone away from Graiglwyd would improve matters for local residents and be compliant with Policies CS1 and AW10 in respect of accessibility and public safety.

Another benefit of the revised scheme is that the existing tarmac playing surface behind the school would be retained as well as the pleasant landscaped amenity space; the latter being used by pupils for sitting out and contains outdoor fitness equipment.

Furthermore and whilst the revisions mean that more of the grassed playing field would be developed, the school has advised that the field is rarely used due to its tendency to waterlog. In this regard, the extent of the remaining open space around the site would be considered more than sufficient to service the school and its usability would be greatly enhanced by both the MUGA and the relocated and improved outdoor growing space.

Therefore, the development would be acceptable both in principle and in terms of the local and national policy framework, subject to consideration of the issues below.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

The amendments to the scheme mean that the immediate visual impact from the development would be limited to the widening of the existing site entrance site from Cwmdare Road. This means that the site boundary with the neighbouring residential estate would be unchanged, and therefore this would represent an improvement over the earlier scheme.

Any other longer views towards the site would be quite limited due to the screening afforded by the mature hedges and trees along the site boundary and existing elevations. In addition, since the majority of the development concerns ground works and the structures associated with the new facilities are either low level or minimal mass, no visual harm would be caused.

Consequently, it is considered that the development is acceptable and the variation of Condition 2 would not be detrimental to the character or appearance of the area.

Impact on neighbouring occupiers

The revised site entrance and drop off area is likely to be beneficial to the residents surrounding the site, since minibuses and taxis should no longer need to wait within the adopted highway serving Graiglwyd and Nantgwyn, It is expected that there would be less noise disturbance from vehicles and pupils, whilst the highway would be less congested.

In all other respects the on-site car parking arrangements and MUGA are unlikely to affect the dwellings to the west and south-west due to the level of the playing surface being much lower; however it is possible that the top of the MUGA floodlights might be apparent.

Nonetheless, the MUGA flood lights, supported by 6m high columns would be at least 70m away from the nearest house and at a lower level. The applicant has stated that since the children leave the School at approximately 15.15hrs, it is unlikely that the lights would be used except for during dark winter days.

The School may wish to offer use of the MUGA to the local community and have previously advised that there may be occasions, if this is the case, when the lights would be on after school hours, but switched off at 21.00hrs. It is considered that a condition preventing use beyond this point would be appropriate.

In light of the above, it is considered that the development as a whole would not be detrimental to the amenity or privacy of neighbouring occupants, and is therefore acceptable in these terms.

Highways

The proposed access works are retrospective and have been completed in accordance with drawing number 5490-3046-B11-REV C. The proposed works, within the site curtilage, to provide the new forty-four space car park, new multi use games arena and new access ramps, have no detrimental impact on highway or pedestrian safety and are therefore acceptable.

There is no expansion of the school and therefore no increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic would be generated. The proposal improves existing safety issues by providing off-street parking spaces and a pick-up and drop-off area. By removing the need to park indiscriminately along Cwmdare Road the available running width for vehicular traffic along a bus route would be maintained.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

The application is for development of a kind that is not CIL liable under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Conclusion

It is considered the proposal would not have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the locality or upon the residential amenity of the surrounding neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the revised access and entrance would not be detrimental to highway safety. The application is therefore considered to comply with the Policies AW5, AW6 and AW10 of the Local Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO THE BELOW CONDITIONS:

1. The development hereby approved shall be completed in accordance with the approved drawing numbers:

5490-3046-B01; 5490-3046-B06; 5490-3046-B07 Rev C1; 5490-3046-B08 Rev C5; 5490-3046-B09 Rev C4; 5490-3046-B10 Rev C2; 5490-3046-B11 Rev C1; 5490-3046-E01 Rev C3; SDR22 Rev B; 03 Rev P0; 10 Rev C0; 11 Rev C0; 12 Rev C0 and 13 Rev C0,

and documents received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th October 2018 and 6th November 2018, unless otherwise to be approved and superseded by details required by any other condition attached to this consent.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

2. Notwithstanding the development hereby approved, the floodlights located around the perimeter of the Multi-Use Games Area shall only be illuminated when the pitch is in use and shall not be used any later than 21.00hrs on any day of the week.

Reason: In the interest of the amenity of neighbouring occupiers in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

=====