DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Anne McDonald.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
18/00646/FP	Provision of 27 parking spaces in school grounds. (Amended plans received 11/06/18).	St Christopher School Barrington Road Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3JZ

Submitted Plan Nos

PL01 PL02 PL03A; C.01C 404 401B Photos

1.0 Policies

XT2	Parking

SPDVP	Vehicle Parking at New Development
LP55	Car Parking Standards
LP58	Letchworth Garden City Design Principles
LP8	Development in Towns
XD3	Protecting Living Conditions

2.0 Site History

2.1 Extensive planning history for the site for extensions and works to trees over the years, set out on the site history sheet.

3.0 Representations

3.1 The application was advertised with site and press notices and individual neighbour letters. Replies have been received from five households. Following the consultation on the amended plans one reply from one household has been received. All raise objections or concerns to the application. Key points raised include:

- We have no objection to the car park, but with the revised application drawings we remain concerned that the works will result in the removal of the cypress trees that are on the boarder of the current car parking the gardens on Cloisters Road. These trees are 8m high and shield out a lot of light from the school buildings and external spotlights. These external lights high up on the gym and pool building are on all night, and if these trees are removed these lights will shine onto our house making it difficult to sleep.
- If the trees are removed and the mini-buses park next to the fence, those on the bus will be able to see over the fence into our house and garden.
- We object to the removal of these trees on the grounds of light pollution and loss of privacy.
- The school has always stated that these trees would remain at a height of 8m to provide a visual and acoustic screen.
- To achieve the two car width driveway the trees will have to be removed.
- The planning statement states that this car park is to reduce the burden of traffic on Cloisters Road. However, most parents will still want to drop off on the road to stop the bottle neck of traffic at the school entrance.

- Traffic over the years to the school has got significantly worse.
- My house and garden is downhill to the site and I do want run off / storm water to go into my garden.
- To prevent light pollution please can only low level LED lights be used to prevent light spill into our gardens.
- The acoustic fence should be used against all the houses and my garden with the cars driving past both ways.
- No building works are weekends.
- Please can the school give carful consideration to the use of the car park at night and at weekends and in the holidays.
- We consider a speed limit of 20mph should be introduced on Cloisters Road.
- We believe that the extra width can be achieved by not cutting back the trees, as these works will still adversely affect the neighbours.
- We believe there is a public right of way over land at the end of our garden. When we moved into our house in 1980 out older neighbours were insists that a public rights of way existing but on the plan it seems to be closed at both ends.
- We strongly object to the removal of the hedge at the end of our garden – no.2 Cloisters Lawns.
- We are concerned that the drainage will be inadequate.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site and Surroundings

4.1.1 St Christopher's School is a long established school located off Barrington Road. The main school buildings extend to the north rear of the houses along Cloisters Road and the main school playing fields extend off to the south-west, south of the Letchworth Sports and Tennis Club. The application site is an area of land between the existing pool and drama building rear of numbers 26 – 34 Cloisters Road and 1 and 2 Cloisters Lawn. The land is part scrub land, where soil from a previous build has been stored and become grown over with grass and some scrub / trees. The other part of the application site is an existing car parking area rear of the squash courts next the pool building and is an existing parking area.

4.2 Proposal

4.2.1 The application is seeking full planning permission for the levelling of the land and the creation of 27 car parking spaces with a one way circulation system. To allow the necessary space around the site for manoeuvring and to allow a two car width past the corner of the pool building, the existing cypress hedge is to be cut back, and a further section of hedge 13m in length rear of no.2 Cloisters Lawn is to be removed and replaced with an acoustic fence. The plans show a barrier entry and exit system to the new car parking spaces.

4.2.2 A Planning Statement (PS) has been submitted in support of the proposal which sets out that the extra car parking spaces are for staff, to allow more space in the front car park for parents to use for drop off and pick up to reduce traffic impact on Cloisters Road. The PS also sets out that the school supports non-car modes of transport, with bike facilities and showers for staff and a coach service from the train station, for staff and pupils that currently has capacity for 70 and that this is to be increased to a capacity for 90.

4.3 Key Issues

4.3.1 The key issues in this instance are the need for the spaces, the impact the car parking would have on the amenity of the neighbours and drainage issues.

Principle / Need

4.3.2 There is no objection to the principle of this application. The school is within the urban area of the town of Letchworth, within the Conservation Area. However, the actual site of the proposed car park is screened in views by existing school buildings and the rear of the gardens of the neighbours. From within the school grounds, the new car park is not visible, rear of the pool building. I therefore do not consider that there is any adverse impact on the setting or context of the school or the Conservation Area from this proposed site or application.

4.3.3 The PS sets out that the aim of the proposal is to create more space in the frontage car park for parents to drop off and collect, to reduce parking and congestion in Cloisters Road and Barrington Road. Neighbour comments do state that the school does generate parking congestion and I see no reason to object to an application to reduce parking congestion in the road. I note that the application is seeking to also increase capacity on the bus link to and from the station, and this is supported. I can see no reason to object to the principle or need of this application.

Considerations of the Council's car parking standards

4.3.4 The Council's car parking standards for schools set out that the maximum amount of car parking required is 1 space per full time member of staff plus 1 space per 100 pupils plus 1 space per 8 pupils over 17 or 1 space per 20 pupil under 17. Cycle parking requirements are to be based on 1 space per 5 staff plus 1 space per 3 students.

The agent has confirmed by email on 04/07/18 the following:

Staff:
166 Full time equivalent

Pupils:
Junior School : 164
Senior School: Yrs 9-11: 270
Senior School VI from (Yrs 12&13): 96
Total: 530

Based on Councils figures quoted below:

166 spaces +
+6 spaces (1 per 100 pupils)
+12 spaces (1 per 8 pupils age over 17) (96 in Vi form)
(or +22 spaces at 1 per 20 pupils age under 17)
Total required 184 spaces

Existing total spaces in whole school 108
Proposed additional 27 spaces
Proposed total 135 spaces

4.3.5 Therefore, in conclusion even with the new car parking provision proposed in this application, the school will still be under the maximum amount of car parking allowed by the Council's Vehicle Parking SPD.

4.3.6 With regards to cycle parking at the school, the current provision is 5 covered bicycle shelters which can lock up 48 bicycles at present. The Council's cycle provision would require 33 spaces for staff and 177 for pupil, a total of 210 cycle spaces. Given that the school operates the bus service from the station, and that these are maximum standards, I see no reason to object to this application on this provision of cycle parking spaces. An informative is recommended that should further cycle spaces be needed that these must be provided.

Impact on neighbours – view / setting

4.3.7 Neighbours have objected to the cypress trees / hedge being removed rear of numbers 32 and 34 Cloisters Road to create the width necessary to form the two way route past the corner of the pool building. The neighbours have objected on the basis of the trees providing a visual and acoustic screen, and these concerns were forwarded to the agent. The application has been amended as a result, and the neighbours re-consulted. These trees are to be retained, but cut back in depth and the curb realigned to create the necessary width. I note the neighbour's comments above regarding the wish for these trees to remain, and the promise from the school that they would be retained. However, the plans do clearly state that trees are to be retained and cut back, not removed. I accept that by cutting the trees back, this landscape barrier with the school will be 'thinned'. However, in time the trees will sprout back / thicken out again, and these houses have the benefit of long rear gardens of at least 24m to 30m in depth. In my view, the owners of these houses can plant shrubs / trees on their side of the fence to enhance screening, if needed, following the works. Given that the application is to help road / parking congestion, and the extra width on site is needed to allow two cars to pass each other round the edge of the pool building for safety, I cannot conclude that the impact would be so adverse on the amenities of the neighbours from the works to these trees to justify the refusal of this application for this reason.

4.3.8 I note the neighbours' comments that the external lights on the existing buildings are kept on all night. I do not consider that this is an issue for consideration within this application, as the trees are to be retained and the lights are existing and outside of the red line application site. I consider that this is an issue for the neighbours to take up directly with the school if the lights are shining into their rear gardens and causing a nuisance at night, and to ask the school to switch the lights off at a certain time, or to install sensor lights which only turn on if someone walks past.

4.3.9 A section of hedge rear of no.2 Cloisters Lawn is to be removed and replaced with a 2.4m high acoustic fence. Whilst I note that no.2 is objecting to this, their rear boundary line is 65m in length as it extends rear of no.1. 13m is to be replaced with a fence, and the section to be removed is along the very narrow part of their rear garden between the school boundary and the rear of no.1. Therefore, the main outlook from no.2 and the majority of its rear garden will be left unaffected. I note that along this section of boundary it will look different to the existing mature hedge. However, the owners of no.2 will be able to screen it with planting on their side if they wish, and I do not conclude that the impact on their outlook would be so adversely affected to justify the refusal of this application for this reason.

Impact on neighbours – noise

4.3.10 I accept that the application will generate some noise from cars parking and staring and there will be an increase in the number of trips driving past the corner of the pool

building to and from the car park rear of the neighbour's gardens. However, I do not conclude that the adverse impact on neighbours from car noise would be so adverse to justify the refusal of the application. These neighbours benefit from long gardens, and the sections of hedge to be retained, and the new acoustic fence, will act as a buffer to screen / minimize noise. It can be accepted that there will be some noise at peak times, such as the start and end of the school day, and possibly in the evenings after staff are leaving the site following a school event after school or in the evenings but these should not be that often. Given that this is an urban area where there is already a degree of noise in the locality, and especially when set against the context of a large school, the site already generates noise, and I do not consider that the extra noise from the car park against this context would be so demonstrably significant or adverse to justify the refusal of the application for this reason.

Use

4.3.11 The PS sets out that the car park is for staff use to allow more spaces in the car park at the front of the site to be used for school drop off and collections. I note that the site is used at evenings and weekends for its pool and playing field, but as this proposal is specifically to reduce parking and traffic congestion in Cloisters Road and Barrington Road at the start and end of the school day. Therefore, I consider that it is appropriate to only allow the use of this car park on school days for school hours and it should not be used in the evenings and weekends when any noise generated from it would be more noticeable to neighbours as the overall noise and 'busy-ness' of the school would be less. As this car park proposal shows a barrier entry and exit system, I see no reason why this cannot be enforced, and a condition is recommended on this basis.

Lighting

4.3.12 The plans do not show any lighting within the car park, which will be necessary. I consider that this should be low level bollard style lighting, which should only be on for the times the car park is used and school and its grounds are open, to stop any light spill onto the neighbours. A condition is recommended on this basis, which I consider is entirely reasonable.

Drainage

4.3.13 Neighbours downhill have expressed concern that water will run off in 'storm' conditions and flow / flood into their gardens. Drawing no. C01.C shows a drainage system that is to be put in with a drainage chamber and a channel drain and sump / gully unit. I have rung the HCC FRA team, who said that their criteria for consultation are 10 or more dwellings or a site area greater than 1 ha. This site area of the car park area is approximately 950 sqm, well below the FRA consultation level. In the conversation with HCC FRA, I stated that the plans show soak aways, a channel drain and chambers. He said that the success of the drainage system will depend on the infiltration rates, and providing the soil is not a heavily clay soil, there is no reason this method would not work. The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment study states that the key geological influence in North Hertfordshire is lower cretaceous Chalk. I therefore have no reason not to conclude that the drainage system will be effective in this instance.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 For the above reasons, no objection is raised to this application. Recommend conditional permission.

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

   Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

   Reason:To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Before the commencement of any other works on the site, trees to be retained shall be protected by the erection of temporary chestnut paling or chain link fencing of a minimum height of 1.2 metres on a scaffolding framework, located at the appropriate minimum distance from the tree trunk in accordance with Section 4.6 of BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations, unless in any particular case the Local Planning Authority agrees to dispense with this requirement. The fencing shall be maintained intact for the duration of all engineering and building works. No building materials shall be stacked or mixed within 10 metres of the tree. No fires shall be lit where flames could extend to within 5 metres of the foliage, and no notices shall be attached to trees.

   Reason:To prevent damage to or destruction of trees to be retained on the site in the interests of the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

4. Any lights within the new car park area shall only be low level bollard style lights and are only to be on during the opening hours of the school, unless otherwise agreed in writing.

   Reason - to stop light spill onto the neighbour's garden.

5. The car park hereby approved, shall only be used on Mondays - Fridays during school hours and shall not be used at weekends or in the school holidays.

   Reason - this car park is only required to reduce car parking and traffic congestion during school drop off and collection times.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Informative/s:

Cycle Parking

In the event that the existing cycle parking bays are fully used on most days, additional cycle parking must be provided.

Signed  Simon Ellis Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 4 July 2018	