

Application Recommended for Approval
Rosehill with Burnley Wood Ward

APP/2017/0252

Full Planning Application

Provision of over-spill car park for use in association with events in/at Towneley Hall/Park

LAND AT TOWNELEY PARK BURNLEY



Background:

The land surrounding Towneley Hall is Listed as a Grade II Park and Garden. The list description explains their historic interest as being “Gardens and pleasure grounds which were formed largely in the mid to late C18 incorporating some C17 and early C18 features. The park incorporates an avenue of late C17 origin within landscaped grounds of the later C18 and early C19 laid out by Charles Towneley.”

The principal building, Towneley Hall itself, is Grade I Listed and dates from the C15. Some 50m north of the Hall is part of a stable building of late C18 date (Grade II Listed), some 20m to the north-west of the Hall is a C18 Brewhouse (Grade II Listed), and some 100m to the east is a Grade II Listed War Memorial.

The applicant is the Council and the following reasons behind the proposed application are presented below.

Towneley Hall hosts a wide range of events including exhibitions, weddings, family celebrations, corporate events, meetings of the Towneley Hall Society and numerous other functions. For some events the capacity of the existing car park in front of the Hall is too small, even when the car park is stewarded and cars are directed to park across the front of the ha-ha (outside of the marked bays).

Because of the requirement to maintain access rights for adjoining properties and to ensure there is minimal visual impact on the setting of the Hall, it was not considered suitable or possible to provide any additional spaces on the existing Hall car park.

The large Riverside car park is too distant (630 metres) to expect guests attending functions at the Hall to walk and the costs of providing a shuttle service would be prohibitively expensive for most of the events held at the Hall. The solution identified through consultation with the Towneley Hall Society and the Friends of Towneley Park was to provide an overspill parking area (for up to 40 cars), located at the end of the Hall car park on an area of the Higher Towneley playing fields that are not used for pitches. This location is out of view from the Hall and the approaches to it. Alternative locations including an area at the top of the drive up to the hall and on either side of the Avenue were considered but rejected as they were considered to have a detrimental impact on the visual aspect of the Hall.

The overspill car park will be surfaced using a reinforced grass surface. The car park will have a separate entrance and exit and timber bollards will delineate parking spaces, similar to the timber bollards that currently line the edge of the Hall car park, and access to and from the car park will be on a widened stone surface path that will be 4.5 metres wide from the Hall car park to the entrance and 3m width for the lower section.

It is anticipated that the car park will be used on up to 50 occasions per year, with the access controlled using a wooden field gate of the same design as the one at the top of the main avenue. This will be kept locked and unlocked by staff only when it is required for event parking, and the gates will be locked after use has ended. There will be no disabled parking spaces provided on the overspill car park as there is provision on the Hall car park and the surface and distance from the Hall mean that this car park is not ideal for disabled users.

Relevant Policies:

Burnley Local Plan Second Review

General Policies:

GP1 – Development within the Urban Boundary

GP3 - Design and Quality

GP5 - Access for All

Environment and Conservation:

E10 - Alterations, extensions, change of use and development affecting listed buildings

E15 - Locally Important Buildings, Features and Artefacts

E16 - Areas of Traditional Construction

E17 – Historic Parks and Gardens

Economy and Work:

EW3 – New Leisure, Tourist, Arts and Cultural Development Outside Town Centres

Transport and Movement:

TM6 – Walking and Horse Riding in the Countryside

Other Material Considerations

Emerging Burnley Local Plan Policies (Proposed Submission Document - 2017)

SP4 – Development Strategy
SP5 – Development Quality and Sustainability
HE1 – Identifying and Protecting Burnley’s Historic Environment
HE2 – Conservation and Enhancement of Designated Heritage Assets and Their Setting

National Planning Policy Framework
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

Site History:

No applications relevant to this location.

Consultation Responses:

LCC Highways (Developer Support) - No highway concerns and no objections on highway grounds.

LCC Public Rights of Way Officer – No comments received at the time of the submission of this report.

Towneley Hall Society - The Society is wholeheartedly in favour of this application to ensure the future prosperity of The Hall in times of difficult funding.

Planning and Environmental Considerations:

The key consideration with this proposal is the balance of the need and requirements of the proposal against the impact of the work on the historical or architectural significance of the building and its setting. The proposal also runs close to the existing Bridleway 233 that runs through the Park so any impacts on this will also need to be considered.

VISUAL IMPACT AND IMPACT ON SETTING OF LISTED BUILDINGS

Towneley Hall hosts a wide range of events including exhibitions, weddings, family celebrations, corporate events, meetings of the Towneley Hall Society and numerous other functions. For some events the capacity of the existing car park in front of the Hall is too small, even when the car park is stewarded and cars are directed to park across the front of the ha-ha (outside of the marked bays). It is not possible to provide any additional spaces on Hall car park because of the requirement to maintain access rights for adjoining properties and to minimise the visual impact of parked cars on the setting of the Hall. The large Riverside car park is too distant (630 metres) to expect guests attending functions at the Hall to walk and the costs of providing a shuttle service would be prohibitively expensive for most of the events held at the Hall.

Ensuring that the building is able to continue to offer these additional functions is key in ensuring the longevity of the building and its grounds, and to sustain a viable use of this heritage asset. However, the impact the proposal has on the setting of the Listed Buildings and the Listed Park and Garden must be considered.

In terms of National Guidance, paragraph 129 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that local planning authorities should identify and assess

the significance of heritage assets that may be affected by a proposal and take this assessment into account when considering the impact on the heritage asset, to avoid conflict between its conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF advises that ‘In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 132 states that ‘great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation’ and that any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.



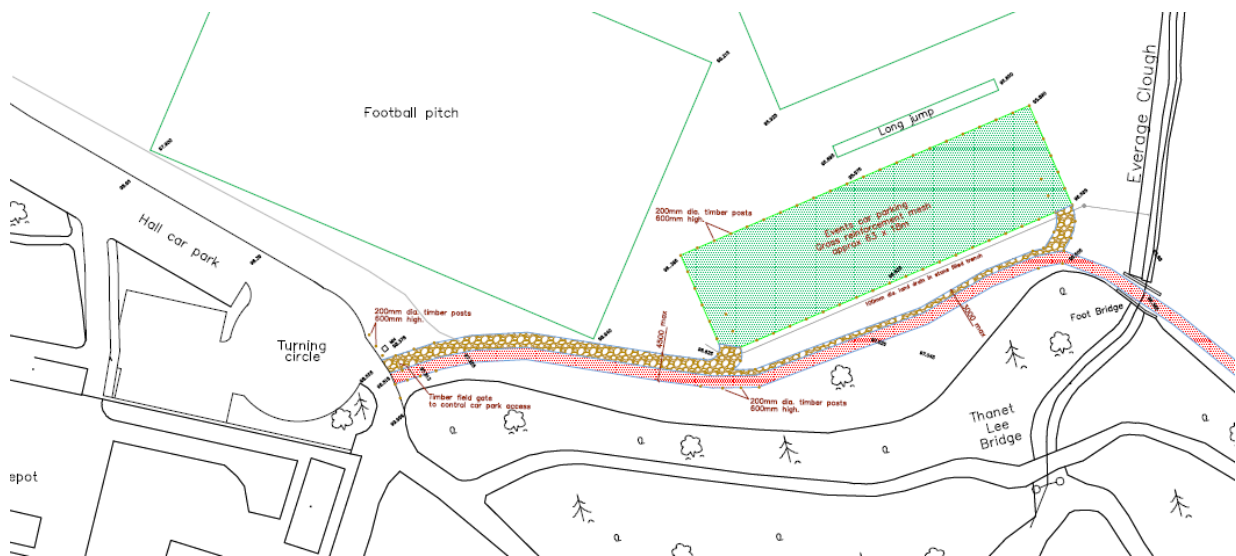
Location of proposal in relation to Towneley Hall

The location of the proposed overspill events car park lies within the Grade II Listed Park and Garden, and close to the Grade I Listed Towneley Hall itself. There are other Listed Buildings nearby however the proposal is not considered to affect them. The list description explains the historic interest of Towneley Hall Park as being “Gardens and pleasure grounds which were formed largely in the mid to late C18 incorporating some C17 and early C18 features. The park incorporates an avenue of late C17 origin within landscaped grounds of the later C18 and early C19 laid out by Charles Towneley.”

More specifically relating to the location of the proposal, this area is referred to as an area of parkland extending on the north, north-west and north-east sides of the Hall consisting of open grassland with scattered trees, with the parkland on the east side of The Avenue used as playing fields.

The solution identified through consultation with the Towneley Hall Society and the Friends of Towneley Park is to provide an overspill parking area is located at the end of the Hall car park on an area of the Higher Towneley playing fields that are not used

for pitches. This location is out of view from the Hall and the approaches to it, and so the overspill parking area will not have an adverse effect on the visual aspect of the Hall. To further minimise the visual impact of the overspill car park it is proposed that it will be surfaced using a reinforced grass surface, constructed using a honeycomb of plastic cells filled with root zone to support and protect a grass sward. The cells will be laid onto a clean stone sub base to create a permeable and free draining surface. The grass will be mown at the same frequency as the adjoining playing fields to maintain a similar appearance when not in use for parking.



Proposed overspill events car park

The simple layout of the car park with a separate entrance and exit and use of timber bollards to delineate parking spaces will be sufficient to allow approximately 40 additional cars to be parked. The perimeter of the parking area will be delineated using 200mm diameter round section timber posts 500 - 600mm high placed at 3 m centres. This is similar to the timber bollards that currently line the edge of the Hall car park. Access to and from the car park will be on a widened stone surface path that will be 4.5 metres wide from the Hall car park to the entrance and 3m width for the lower section. This will be a shared surface which is considered acceptable given the low frequency of use of the overspill car park and that it will be managed by staff when in use.

It is anticipated that the car park will be used on up to 50 occasions per year with access controlled using a wooden field gate of the same design as the one at the top of the main avenue. This will be kept locked and unlocked by staff only when it is required for event parking. A modest sign on the gate post will identify 'authorised parking only' and the gates will be locked after use has ended. There will be no signs in the overspill parking area and no pay and display machine will be located. Four light columns, painted black, will be located on the south side of the access to provide the minimum level of light necessary to allow people to use the car park in darkness. The lights will operate only on the occasions when the car park is in use. Set back against the edge of the woodland, it is considered that the lights will not be visually intrusive.

The NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as 'the surroundings in which [the asset] is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its

surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral’.

The requirement of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This has been considered by the LPA and is outlined below.



Proposed location of new overflow events car park

The wider setting of the Hall and Parkland, as well as its character and appearance, will be maintained by virtue of the minimal works proposed and the use of soft landscaping (including the timber bollards and grasscrete). The scheme will not visually detract from the setting and character of the Listed premises, and when assessed against the NPPF the harm caused is considered to be less than substantial harm.

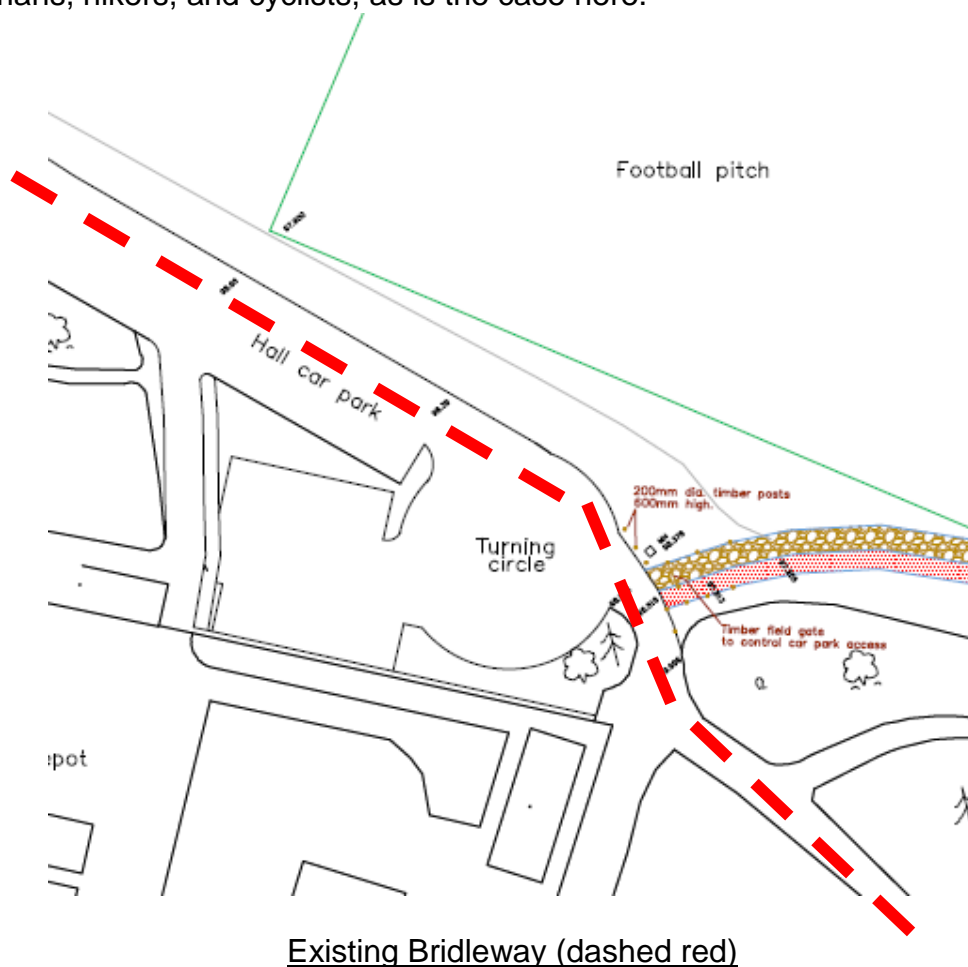
Paragraph 134 of the NPPF advises that ‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.’ This harm must therefore be weighed against securing the sites optimum viable use alongside the public benefits of the scheme. Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) advises that benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

The proposal will allow additional parking for events at Towneley close to the Hall, and provide a safe and accessible route for visitors. The benefits of this proposal ensure

that the use of the Hall and surrounding park and gardens are maximised which will continue to secure the long term use of this building into the future. The more productive use of the site is likely to retain existing employment at this site and potentially lead to further employment growth and job creation, as well as an increased offer for new events moving forward.

IMPACT ON BRIDLEWAY

The existing Bridleway that runs close to the site is annotated on the map below. The proposed new parking area will have no additional impact on the bridleway than that of the existing car parking area that the bridleway runs past. Whilst more commonly associated with horses, bridleways often now serve a wider range of users, including equestrians, hikers, and cyclists, as is the case here.



PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The harm caused to the significance of the heritage asset is considered to be less than substantial. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that where the harm is less than substantial, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case the public benefits of the proposal are considered to outweigh any harm (which in this case there is no perceived harm), and as the proposal is also considered to have an acceptable impact on the adjacent bridleway that runs close to the site, this application is recommended accordingly.

Recommendation:

That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions.

Conditions

1. The development must be begun within three years of the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
3. The proposed overspill car park to be used in connection with events in/at Towneley Hall, hereby approved, shall only be used for this purpose. It shall not be available for general use at any other time.

Reasons

1. Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. To ensure the development is implemented in accordance with the approved plans and to avoid ambiguity.
3. In the interests of highway safety, and to ensure that any limited impacts on the setting of Towneley Hall are themselves limited throughout the year.

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