

Application Recommended for Approval

FUL/2021/0676

Queensgate ward

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Temporary use of recreation land for car park

St Andrews Recreation Ground (Rakehead Rec) Land Adjacent To Burnley General Hospital Casterton Avenue

Applicant:- Royal Blackburn Hospital, East Lanc

Background:

The application is being considered at Committee due to objections that have been made.

The proposal is for a temporary use of part of a recreation ground adjacent to Burnley General Hospital to use for a temporary period as a car park. The recreation ground is in the ownership of the Council.

Proposed site

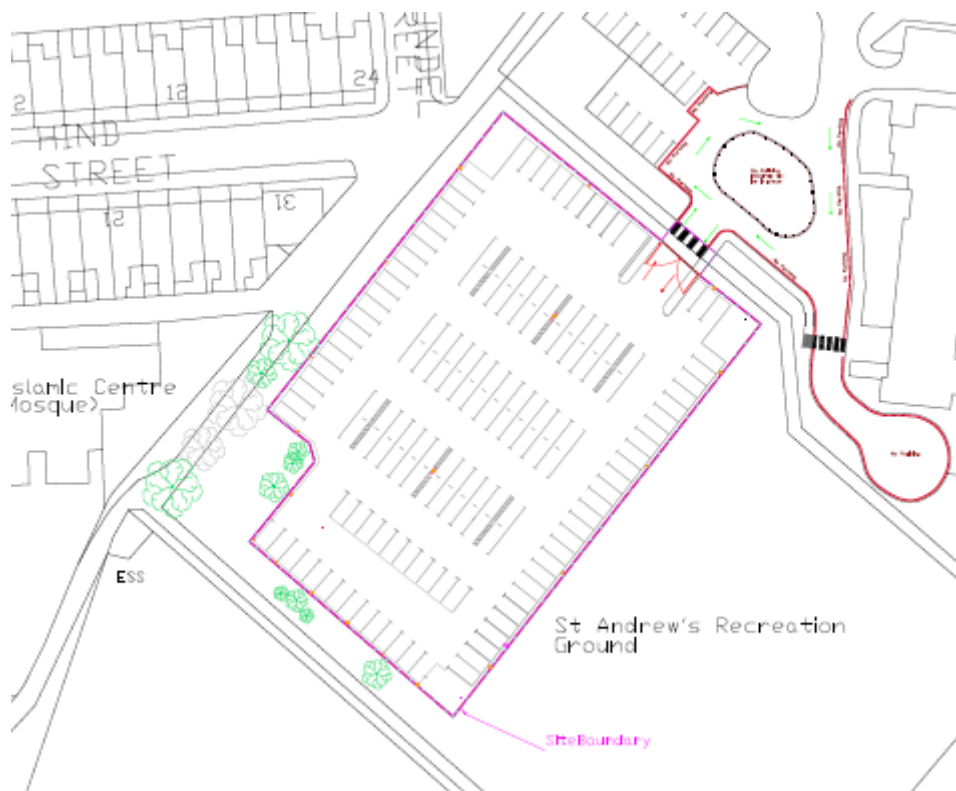


The affected area amounts to approximately 457sqm of open grassed playing area on St Andrew's Recreation Ground (also known as Rakehead Recreation Ground). A path circles the larger area of open space and gates open onto Hind Street to its north west side. The north east boundary of the site bounds the part of the hospital grounds where there is some car parking and a turning area.

The proposal involves forming an access from the hospital grounds into the recreation ground on the north east edge of the site, stripping the turf and laying a gravel surface, erecting new fencing to secure the site and installing lighting.

The applicant initially sought a temporary consent for three years which is intended to relieve pressure and problems with hospital parking following the redevelopment of parts of its site up to a time when a permanent new car parking facility can be provided on the hospital site. The applicant has supplied information to demonstrate how it seeks to achieve its goals for a new car park by July 2024.

Proposed layout



The proposed site has been modified since first submitted to avoid any potential impacts on perimeter trees. The site would be enclosed by a 2.4m high green paladin fence with locked gates at the hospital entrance. Sodium lighting columns up to 6.6m high would be installed at regular intervals around the site perimeter.

The proposed car park layout indicates approximately 160 spaces. Given that the car park would be surfaced in grit there would be no demarcation of spaces.

Relevant Policies:

Burnley's Local Plan (July 2018)

SP1 – Achieving sustainable development

SP4 – Development strategy

SP6 – Green infrastructure

SP5 – Development quality and sustainability

NE2 – Protected open space

IC1 – Sustainable travel

IC5 – Protection and provision of social and community infrastructure

Material Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

Burnley's Green Spaces Strategy 2015-2025

Site History:

None relevant.

Consultation Responses:

LCC Highways

No objections to the principle of the proposed development. However the layout and access arrangements as submitted are currently unacceptable; a number of amendments are required, these are listed below:

1. A proposed one way system has been shown on the existing access roads to the front of the Rakehead rehab building. Cars currently park along the buildings frontage I have concerns that this is not conducive with the levels of traffic that would be utilising the new car park, especially where the one way and two way traffic merges, there is the potential for conflict. Therefore suitable parking restrictions need to be implemented in this area to keep the access clear.

2. The submitted documentation indicates that the proposed parking will not be marked out, I have concerns that this would lead to inefficient parking and the potentially for cars to block each other in.

In addition to the above I would request that a Travel Plan is produced [a Green Travel Plan 2021=2024 has subsequently been submitted].

Head of Greenspaces and Amenities

Do not wish to raise an objection in principle subject to some or all of the income received during the temporary period being re-invested into the site once the temporary car park has ceased. The field suffers from poor drainage and as such investment in improving the drainage would be recommended. We would also want to look at using some of the income for upgrading existing play facilities on site which currently consist of a MUGA and play area.

It is important that the rest of the field and the recreational facilities provided on site are left open for public use during the temporary period and there is no disruption that would prohibit use for local people.

It would also need to be written into any agreement with the Hospital that the land be put back to the state they find it when they first move on to site (grassed field) and all remedial groundworks are undertaken to our satisfaction.

The requested drainage improvements should be carried out alongside the remedial works to be undertaken by the Hospital's contractors in order to minimise disruption to the local area.

Burnley Civic Trust

Request an undertaking that when the permission to use this for car parking expires they will vacate the land as this is the only land in the area which can be used for recreational purposes.

Publicity

Letters of objection have been received from the occupiers of five houses on Hind Street. A summary of the points in these letters is provided below:-

- This is an important part of the fabric of the local community
- Concern that an important community asset will be lost
- Further creep by the hospital into open space

- Lack of analysis of demand and availability of car parking spaces
- Redundant hospital buildings could be demolished and used for car parking
- Appears to be a permanent use
- It is a valued green space that is used by young children and elderly people and dog walkers and used for socialising and by uniform organisations
- It is a safe place to play where parents can watch their children
- It is the only available site for children without crossing a main road
- Impact on living conditions for residents from traffic, outlook onto a car park, exhaust fumes
- Impact on wildlife, loss of flora and fauna and vegetation that will remove habitat for bats, foxes, hedgehogs, butterflies, moths and insects
- Proposed lighting of the car park will adversely affect wildlife
- Runs contrary to the ethos and environmental policy of the Council
- Unsuitable style of fencing
- Impact on underground watercourse
- Impact on surface water drainage and flooding
- Land stability issues from mine shafts and tunnels on the site
- Will make it difficult to maintain the remainder of the open space.

Planning and Environmental Considerations:

Principal of proposal

The proposed site forms part of a larger area of public open space, consisting of green space and play equipment which is designated as Protected Open Space. The application site is approximately a third of the overall protected open space at the northerly end of the space.

Extract from Policies Map (west)



Policy NE2 states that development will not be permitted within Protected Open Spaces except where the proposals are for appropriate recreational, community and nature conservation uses and where any building and structures would not undermine the fundamental nature and purpose of the site as open space. It also states that Protected Open Spaces should be maintained and enhanced for recreational, amenity, biodiversity or other benefits as they provide an important component of Burnley's green infrastructure network.

A proposed use of this land for a car park use would therefore run contrary to Policy NE1 which seeks to protect this area of open space. The need for the open space as referenced by letters of objection that have been received from local residents is established through the local plan process and the level of protection that this affords is without question. The current proposal seeks to use approximately a third of the green open space as a car park for a temporary period. The original proposal stated that a temporary period of three years was sought. Following the submission of further information, the applicant states that the temporary use is required up to July 2024 after which the use of the land as public open space would be resumed. Whilst in principle this would conflict with Policy NE1, it is necessary to also consider the applicant's justification for the proposal and whether there would be any longer term benefits that would mitigate against a temporary loss of open space.

Proposed temporary use

The circumstances surrounding the applicant's temporary need for off-site parking have been described in the application submission. The applicant affirms that there is a need to improve sustainable access to hospital car parking in order to meet the current and expansion demands for additional staff, patient and visitor numbers. The applicant reports that there is an increased number of patients attending site for elective cases which puts a strain on car parking. The applicant anticipates that problems with on-site car parking will be managed in the future by the development of a multi-storey car park within the hospital grounds. In the short term however this would displace approximately 140 surface car park spaces. To relieve pressure from a shortage of car parking spaces, the applicant wishes to use the application site for staff parking up to July 2024 when it is anticipated that a new multi-storey car park would be complete.

It is accepted that a short term need for the parking of hospital staff is a concern for the applicant and for the delivery of hospital services. There would therefore be a benefit in permitting a short term solution that would have a public benefit by ensuring staff can park at or close to work. The public benefit would not however outweigh the harm from any prolonged or permanent loss of open space. There are concerns from neighbours that any temporary use may become permanent. The applicant reports that alternative park and ride options for the hospital will be explored to cater for any need that remains present after a temporary period up to July 2024.

The impact of a temporary loss of the open space until July 2024 can be partially mitigated if improvements to the open space can be secured which, once restored, would provide a longer term benefit to the local population that use the open space. The Head of Greenspaces and Amenities suggests the need for drainage works to the land and other improvements to the remainder of the open space which includes play equipment and a MUGA. The provision of seating and landscaping on the open space would also enhance its value as open space.

On the basis of a short term need only (up to July 2024), the public benefits of providing car parking to serve the needs of hospital staff would, subject to longer term improvements to the open space, outweigh the harm from a short term loss of part of the protected open space at this site. This would not however be the case without tangible improvements to the open space following the expiry of the temporary period. In addition, it should be noted that no further temporary period is likely to outweigh the harm from a loss of protected open space.

A condition is recommended to require a scheme for the restoration and measures to improve the open space. The delivery of these requirements will be a matter between the applicant and the owner of the land (Burnley Borough Council).

Access and safety

Policy IC1 requires development to provide safe access. Whilst LCC Highways has no objections in principle to the proposal, it recommends that on-street parking within the hospital grounds is prohibited outside the Rakehead rehab building to ensure access is not impeded to the car park. LCC Highways also express concern that the proposed grit surfacing of the car park would prevent line marking which would maximise the use of the space for car parking. The applicant states that as the car park would be for staff only, cars would be guided and marshalled to ensure its optimum use. This would be a matter for the applicant to manage. There are therefore no fundamental highway objections to the proposal.

Other issues

The path around the perimeter of the existing open space would be maintained which would continue to allow access to the remainder of the open space, equipment and MUGA.

The proposed site has been amended to avoid any disruption to trees; the removal of vegetation would be limited to a short section to gain access to the site.

The proposed green paladin fencing is an open mesh design that is relatively unobtrusive and would be practical by preventing balls to be carried over into the car park.

The proposed sodium lights are relatively sensitive to the site's surroundings and the light source would be directed down into the car park to avoid light spillage or affect on wildlife.

The surfacing of the car park is designed for a temporary use only but would be permeable which would be beneficial in reducing surface water run-off.

Conclusion

The site is designated Protected Open Space and as such the proposal is not in accordance with Policy NE1 of Burnley's Local Plan. In this case, the public benefits from a temporary use only, in order to relieve parking issues for staff at Burnley General Hospital, would, subject to securing longer term improvements to the open space, outweigh the short term harm of the loss of this area of open space. Conditions are necessary to control the temporary period and ensure that the open space is restored with benefits to users of the protected open space.

Recommendation: Approve

Conditions

1. The use of the car park shall cease no later than the 1st July 2024.

Reason: This is a temporary consent only. A longer term or permanent use of the land as car park would be harmful to the availability of open space in the local area and would be contrary to Policy NE2 of Burnley`s Local Plan (July 2018).

2. Within six months from the date of this permission, a scheme for the restoration (to also include what will be removed from the) and improvement of the site and the open space shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the details are satisfactory to ensure that the standard of the open space is maintained and improved to provide longer term benefits to users of the open space, in accordance with Policy NE2 of Burnley`s Local Plan (July 2018).

3. By no later than 1st September 2024, the approved scheme of restoration and improvement works (required by Condition 2) shall be carried out, completed and the site made available for use as public open space.

Reason: To ensure that the necessary works take place and the protected open space is restored for public use, in accordance with Policy NE2 of Burnley`s Local Plan (July 2018).

4. Prior to the temporary use of the land being commenced, details of how on-street parking within the hospital grounds will be controlled to permit traffic to flow in and out of the car park, shall be implemented in accordance with details which shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that access is not impeded, in the interests of highway safety, in accordance with Policy IC1 of Burnley`s Local Plan (July 2018).

5. The Green Travel Plan 2021-24 submitted with this application shall be adhered to throughout the temporary period of this consent.

Reason: To encourage sustainable travel patterns, in accordance with Policy IC1 of Burnley`s Local Plan (July 2018).

Janet Filbin
30th March 2022