



Ref. AH493/03052017

Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road, Reading: Planning application for new car park - Note on heritage matters

Proposal

It is proposed to create a new area of car park in the northwest corner of the school's land holdings, to the immediate west of Grove House. The Site comprises a level area of ground in the northwest corner of the school's estate. It lies adjacent to Grove House, an undesignated school building dated 1894 which has been refurbished and extended in 1960 and 1964. Situated on the school's boundary, the Site lies close to the junction of the A327 Shinfield Road and Pepper Lane. Currently, much of the area comprises lawns sub-divided by hedges. The northern and northwestern extents of the Site are under tree cover with lower lying shrubs, predominantly rhododendron, at the periphery. A curving access road extends from the lateral drive through the trees to the rear of Grove House – this road is proposed to form part of the car park and its access.

Previous work

Detailed heritage assessment has already been recently undertaken at Leighton Park School, in respect of the construction of new facilities at the site (Armour Heritage 2015). A considerable amount of heritage assessment work was undertaken through the course of the planning process and this note will draw heavily on that work, as its conclusions are considered to be valid in respect of the current proposal.

As an important element of the heritage assessment undertaken in relation to the application for the construction of new facilities, detailed assessments of significance were completed with regard to a number of designated and undesignated heritage assets within the school grounds. A number of these have been reassessed within this document and these are set out in the table below.

Name	Date	Designation	Distance from site
School House & Attached Laboratories at Leighton Park School	1830	Grade II	190m
Grove House	1894	None	5m
Townson House	1910	None	130m
Peckover Hall	1916	None	75m
Lodge to Whiteknights Park House	Late 19th century	Grade II	190m
Blandford Lodge	Late 19th century	Grade II	125m
Whiteknights House Annexe	Late 19th century	Grade II	315m



Assessment of heritage assets

School House: The heritage asset regarded as of most significance within the school grounds is the Grade II Listed School House & Attached Laboratories. Previous assessment and the Grade II Listing have identified the 'Old School' as of moderate heritage value locally, with much of its heritage significance derived from its historical value, particularly from an associative viewpoint with the attached Laboratories block dating to 1891-92 and credited to the British architect Alfred Waterhouse. The setting of the School House is also considered to be of significance. To the north of the school much of the original parkland attached to the building, which formerly represented a modest country house, survives. Whilst it has been eroded somewhat through development of further school buildings as the establishment grew through the 19th and 20th centuries, much of it still survives to the north of the main east-west access route to School House and its small area of parking. To the south of this road, whilst many mature trees survive, much of the parkland has been given over to sports pitches and related facilities.

Grove House: The adjacent Grove House, whilst undesignated, still represents an important historic building, particularly in its contribution to the historical development of Leighton Park School. The building was constructed in 1894, the Governors of the school having received a windfall from Grove House School in Tottenham. Grove House remained one of only two buildings at the school site until 1914 when further construction was undertaken. Architecturally Grove House is of recognisable late Victorian design with high gables and multiple stacks. The presence of a modern single story extension is considered to detract considerably from the building's aesthetic and architectural value, in particular when viewed from the south/front. Its wider parkland setting contributes positively to its significance, although views across it are rather limited.

The remainder of the heritage assets set out in the table above have been scoped out of further consideration, due to the Site's location and nature.

Assessment of impact

School House: It is not considered that development of modest car parking facilities at the Site will impact upon either the setting or significance of School House. The setting of the Listed Building has been assessed to comprise the suite of historic and modern school facilities, including the new facilities currently under construction which incorporate the 1970s music block to the immediate west of School House and its attached Science Block.

The Site is set slightly away from the surviving parkland in an area already largely developed through landscaping associated with the lawns to the west of Grove House and includes the aforementioned looping access road to the rear of the school building. Thus, it is considered that development at the Site will not encroach further into the remnant parkland setting of the Listed Building. Intervening new school buildings and trees within the remnant parkland serve to effectively screen the Site from the Listed Building.

In addition, it is assessed that development of new car parking facilities away from School House will have a beneficial effect on the setting of the Listed Building, effectively removing car parking from close to School



House, particularly on the approach road from the west where it currently creates a rather obtrusive modern addition to an important approach to the Listed Building, designed as an area where views of the Listed Building are revealed as one turns east along one of the original carriage drives to the former country house.

Grove House: The setting of Grove House comprises a number of school buildings to the east, all of which post-date it. Development to the west of Grove House will effectively extend development associated with the school around the perimeter of the surviving parkland and, in this context, is considered an appropriate location for additional facilities of this nature. Any negative effects upon this historic building's setting are considered to be outweighed by the benefits of the reduction of car parking around, and on the approaches to, the Grade II Listed School House.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the potential effects of the proposed development of new car parking facilities in the northwest corner of the Leighton Park School estate have been assessed. This assessment has concluded No Harm in relation to the setting or significance of either the Grade II Listed School House or the late 19th century undesignated Grove House, which lies adjacent to the Site. A Positive Beneficial Effect has been identified in relation to School House, derived from the removal of car parking from around the Listed Building and on the important historic approach from the east.

Given this assessment, it is concluded that there are no heritage related concerns which should preclude development of car parking facilities at the Site.