

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Tilehurst Ward

App Ref: PL/24/1042 Full planning permission

Address: CHURCHEND PRIMARY ACADEMY, USK ROAD, TILEHURST, READING, RG30 4HP

Proposal: New fencing to West, South West and South Eastern Boundaries and security lighting fitted to school building

Applicant: Ms Helen Clark

Received date: 12/08/2024

Target Decision date: 12/03/2025

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a primary school with playing fields which wrap around the site. There are existing boundary fences and gates and some external lighting affixed to the building. For the most part the boundary of the school is adjacent to the rear of properties which face Usk Road, Routh Lane and New Lane Hill. The boundary to the east is to the boundary with a car park. To the west, the application site is adjacent (but not within) the Routh Lane Conservation Area. Part of the boundary is adjacent to the rear boundary of the curtilage of a listed building ('Green Lea' 221, New Lane Hill). There are TPO trees (no: 38/001) within the rear garden of St. Michael's Cottage, Routh Lane.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

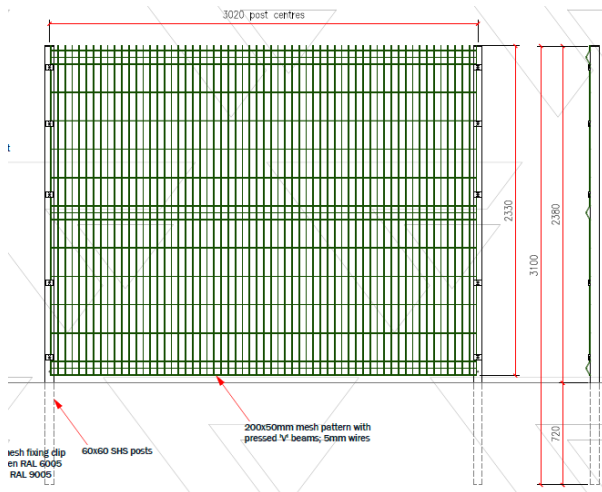
The proposal is for the following:

- New boundary and replacement boundary fencing at ground level to top height of 2.38m and 3.02m width to post centre. Powder coated with open mesh design.
- Installation of new gates at 2.35m high
- New security lighting
- CCTV cameras

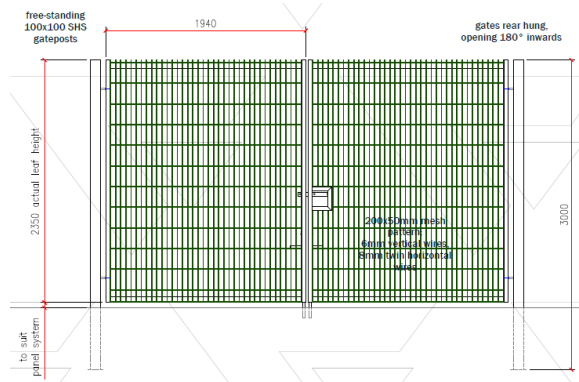
Plans and other information considered:

- Drawing no: 713.163288 (00) 02, dated August 2025 - Site Location Plan, received 12th August 2025
- Drawing no: (00) (01) – Existing Fencing Plan, received 17th February 2025
- Design and Access Statement for Installation of Security Fencing and External Lighting, dated August 2024, by Eddisons, received 12th August 2024
- Drawing no: (90) 01 F - Proposed Safeguarding Plan, received 7th March 2025
- Guard Safe V-Mesh Fencing Specification, received 27th January 2025
- Drawing no: Vmesh/24/std - Guard Safe Secure VMesh Panel Arrangement 2.4m - CLA Fabrications Ltd, received 27th January 2025
- Drawing no: GM/DL/24/40 Mesh Systems Stock Gates 2.35mh x 4.0m w - CLA Fabrication Ltd, received 27th January 2025
- Drawing no: GM/SL/12 – Mesh Systems Stock Gates, received 27th January 2025
- LAKQU2 on post [Lock specification]
- Skyline Slim 30 W LED Floodlight, Bell Lighting, received 27th January 2025
- Drawing no: TPP-01, dated 11/2/25 – Tree Protection, received 13th February 2025

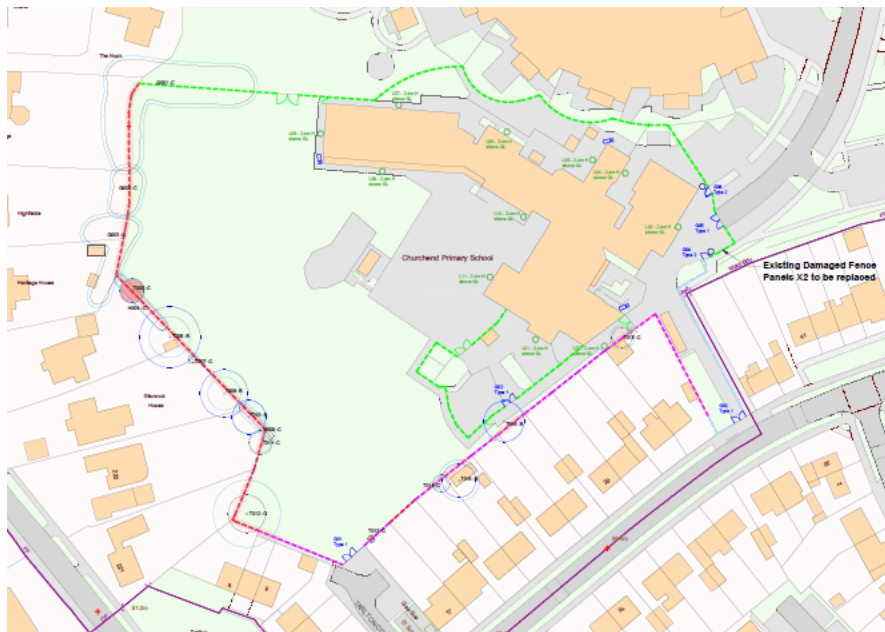
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement, Report ref: 250210-2.0-CPS-AMS-AN, dated 11/2/2025, prepared by Holt Arboricultural Tree Consultants, received 13th February 2025



Proposed Fencing



Proposed Gates



Site Plan

4. CONSULTATIONS

Three site notices were displayed on 17th January 2025 (one at the Usk Road entrance, one at the end of Tarlton Court and one on Routh Lane)

One neighbour letter was received from St. Michael's Cottage, Routh Lane as follows:

- The new fence will create an area to which access for maintenance will significantly more difficult. The school needs to incorporate into its grounds maintenance schedule provision for regular treatment of the unwanted growth in this area by whatever means it can.

- There is a large ash tree close to the border protected by a TPO. Its roots will extend to the area where the proposed fencing is to be installed. If as consequence of the proposed work the tree were to fail we would face a significant financial cost in dealing with the aftermath.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee – no comments received.

RBC – Natural Environment Officer – The Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) covers the points expected, but there are a few queries / requested amendments:

- An explanation is required for the difference in approach to B & C category trees – if a tree is retained, its roots need to be protected from harm in the same way, regardless of category.
- Operation 1- for clarity, if tree works are agreed within an approved AMS, a separate tree works app or Notice is not required.
- Operation 2 (4) – why 500mm deep exploration? 5.1 confirms the majority of roots to be in the top 600mm, however Operation 2 (8) states footings will be 650mm. Latest fence proposal plan shows 400mm footings. Depths stated for exploration in AMS may, therefore, need to be amended.
- What's the purple line on the TPP? Clarity is required on proposed fence line.
- I believe T006 Ash is the TPO Ash in garden of St Michaels Cottage – crown lifting (as approved under a tree works application PL/24/1437) has been done so the proposed lifting stated should no longer be required.
- Proposed tree pruning – crown lift of 2-2.5m proposed. Fence is 2.4m high so I suspect 2.5m will be the minimum required?

If amendments are not made prior to a decision, a pre-commencement AMS condition would be required.

Planning Officer Note: Amended fencing details, Tree Protection Plan and AMS were received and the Natural Environment Officer confirmed that the details were acceptable subject to a condition that works should be in accordance with the approved details and an informative.

RBC Conservation Officer – No objection.

Discussions with the agent

During the course of the application further detail and clarification was requested as follows:

- The specific siting of the fencing and lighting and ensuring details across all plans were consistent;
- Details to be shown on plans of where proposed gates and gate types would be;
- Showing details on plan of where proposed gates (and gate type) would be;
- How areas, where the proposed fence would create a gap with an existing fence, would be dealt with to avoid maintenance issues; and
- Details of proposed lighting.

The agent provided the following further information:

- Lights to be no higher than 2.4 m from the ground.
- All existing fencing to be replaced will remain in the same location. All new fencing will either be to the boundary or provide an offset with access gates [in order to access for maintenance].

- Amended Safeguarding Plan to show all gate and fence details annotated/ labelled.
- Amended Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement, with detail of how fencing would be dealt with around the protected trees

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Policy EN6 - New Development in a Historic Context

Policy EN14 - Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Policy OU1 – New and Existing Community Facilities

SPD

Routh Lane Conservation Area Appraisal (South Park Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy. Of those listed above Policies CC7 and EN14 are proposed for amendment, but the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan, and at present, due to the status of the emerging Local Plan have limited

weight in decision making. The current policies can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

6. APPRAISAL

The relevant matters are as follows:

- a) Principle
- b) Design
- c) Trees
- d) Impact on Residential Amenity

a) Principle

Policy OU1 supports development which improves community facilities, which includes schools. The proposed fencing, new gates, lighting and security cameras would enhance the facilities at the school and the principle of development is, therefore, considered acceptable.

b) Design

Policy CC7 requires that *"all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located."*

Policy EN1 states *"Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced."* This includes Conservation Areas.

Policy EN6 requires new development to *"make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities..."*

It is not considered that the installation of a boundary fence and new gates, which would be open in structure, and would replace similar fencing in parts or be adjacent to neighbours own fencing, would have a detrimental impact on the character and setting of the Conservation area nor affect the significance of the listed building. No objection was raised by the Conservation officer.

This would specifically be the case as there is it would not be a significant change to the existing arrangements and there is a range landscaping to the boundaries too. Please see below regarding works close to retained trees (including protected under TPO trees).

The proposed additional lighting and security cameras would be affixed to the building, as are existing, and there would be no detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the school.

Overall, the proposal is, therefore, considered to accord with Policies, CC7, EN1 and EN6.

c) Trees

Policy EN14 requires the protection of trees from damage or removal.

Following initial comments by the Natural Environment Officer an amended Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement were submitted. The method includes the reuse of existing post holes where possible or for new locations, exploratory hand digging within RPAs to establish the presence of significant tree roots. The location of posts is flexible. Post holes will be excavated using a hand operated auger.

The Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that the amendments are acceptable, subject to a condition and informative.

d) Amenity

Policy CC8 states *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties..”* including with regard to visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; harm to outlook, and artificial lighting.

The proposed lights would be at a maximum height of 2.4m above ground. The proposed lights are floodlights and would be motion sensor controlled rather than being permanently on and would have a timing of ca 30 seconds on. During the course of the application amended plans were received re-siting lights L02 and L03 to minimise potential disturbance to the amenity of residents. The majority of the lights would be a significant distance from residential properties with the closest ones, located on the south/south-eastern sides of the building, at a minimum distance of ca 32m from the rear elevation of houses facing Usk Road. It is considered that the distance, combined with the perimeter fencing, bushes and trees would mitigate any significant potential impacts. A condition is included requiring the lights to remain as sensor controlled.

It is considered that the proposed scheme, subject to the condition, would comply with Policy CC8.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Application Permitted

Recommended Conditions:

- Standard time limit
- Approved plans
- Lighting - sensor controlled
- In accordance with Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement

Informatives:

- Terms and conditions
- Complaints about construction
- Encroachment
- Advice to adhere to approved Arboricultural Methods Statement Trees in Conservation Areas
- Positive and proactive