

SECTION D

DEVELOPMENT TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Background Documents: the deposited documents; views and representations received as referred to in the reports and included in the development proposals dossier for each case; and other documents as might be additionally indicated.

Item D1

Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School, London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 17 July 2013.

Application by Rosherville C of E Primary School for the erection of 2.4m high weldmesh fence along the western boundary of the hard play area. Rosherville C Of E Primary School, London Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 9JQ – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013).

Recommendation: Permission to be granted

Local Members: N. Thandi and S. Howes

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. Rosherville School, Northfleet is located on the south side of London Road within a predominately residential area, adjacent to the Northfleet embankment. The school is comprised of the original Victorian, flint clad building plus a modern, single storey extension of brick construction and a modular classroom building. There is a hard play area and small car park at front of the school, which shares a boundary to the west with one residential property. There are playing fields to the rear of the school which adjoin the gardens of several residential properties along the western boundary. To the east of the school there is a wooded area and cliff top.
2. Approximately 65% of the site is bordered by 2.7m high, green palisade fencing; it forms a barrier between the hard play area and car park at the front of the school and runs along the length of the eastern and southern boundaries. Currently a 3.2 - 3.5m chain link perimeter fence is in place along most of the western boundary. There are pedestrian and vehicle gated access points to the site within the front brick wall with iron railings, of approximately 1.5m in height, facing onto London Road. A site location plan is attached.

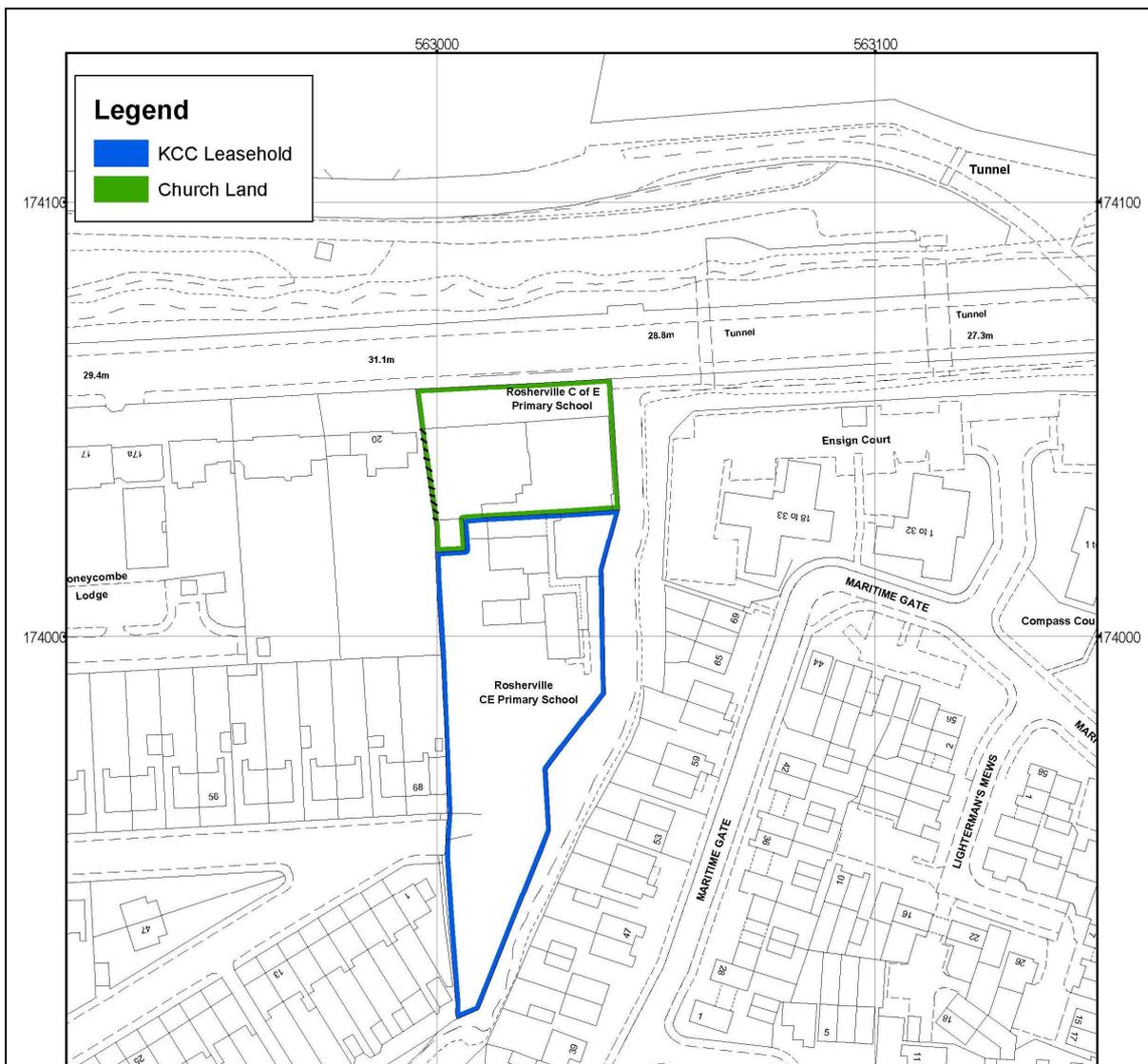
Background and Proposal

3. The proposal area is a section of fencing at the front of the school along the western perimeter of the hard play area, adjacent to a residential property (see the *Site Location Plan*). The applicant reports that there have been an increased number of break-ins on local schools, and that members of staff have been previously called out by the School's monitoring alarm company because the alarm has been set off, often in the early hours of the morning. The applicant states that the 3m plywood fence previously in place along the western boundary of the hard play area, erected in 2009, had become 'unsafe' and was subsequently taken down for this reason in December 2012.

Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School, London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)

- 4. A planning application for a permanent replacement was submitted in January 2013, proposing a 2.7m high, green palisade fence to match most of the perimeter fencing around the school. Currently there is still an existing 3.2 – 3.5m chainlink fence and a boundary wall in place in the proposal area, which was situated between the previous plywood fence and the neighbouring property. See *photographs (a) and (b) of the application site*. The chainlink fence would be taken down if the proposed fence receives planning permission. Following negotiations during the planning process, the proposal has been amended to address local concerns. The application before Committee therefore seeks a 2.4m high section of weldmesh fence, painted green, for a distance of 21.5m to replace existing chainlink fencing.

Rosherville C of E Primary School Site Location Plan

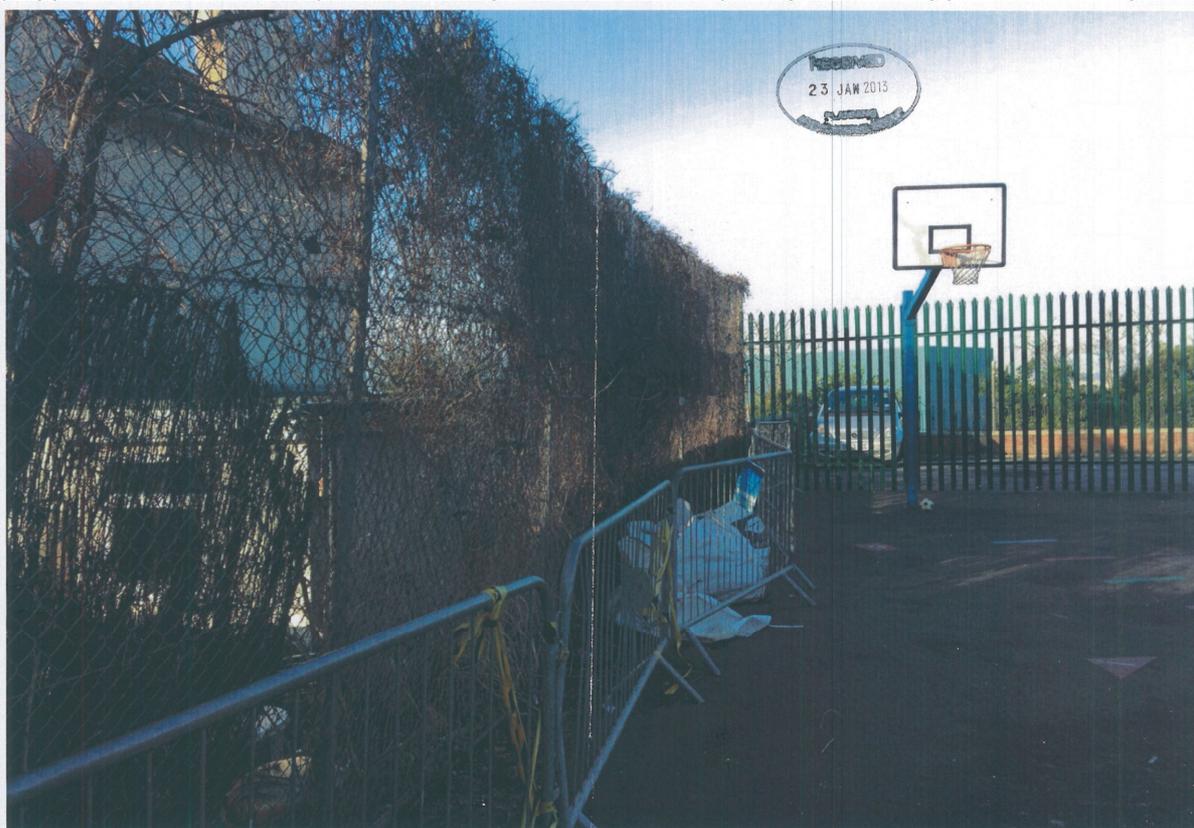


Item D1
Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School,
London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)

(a) Application site: previous plywood fence in place from 2009 until the end of 2012.



(b) Application site in January 2013: existing chainlink fence adjoining the fronting palisade fencing



**Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School,
London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)**

Planning Policy

5. The following National Planning Policy guidance and Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to the consideration of the application:

- (i) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** March 2012, sets out the Government's planning policy guidance for England at the heart of which is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In determining applications the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

In terms of delivering sustainable development in relation to this development proposal, the NPPF guidance and objectives covering the following matters are relevant:

- achieving the requirement for high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;

- (ii) **Gravesham Local Plan Second Review (Deposit Version) 2000:**

Policy BE1 Seeks to give priority to conserving and enhancing the built environment in both the urban and rural areas, particularly the design of new development.

Consultations

6. Gravesham Borough Council raises no objection to the proposal, and commented that the fencing would improve the security of the school site and match with the existing boundary treatments.

Local Member

7. The previous local County Members, Mr. L. Christie and Mr. H. Craske, were notified of the application on the 5 February 2013. The current local County Members, Mr N. Thandi and Mrs S. Howes, were notified that the application would be reported to the Planning Applications Committee on 28 June 2013.

Publicity

8. The application was publicised by the posting of a site notice and the individual notification of two neighbouring residential properties.

Representations

9. I have received one representation from a resident of the adjoining property to the west of the proposed fence. An objection is raised on the basis of the following material concerns:

- The visually intrusive security style of palisade fencing adjoining the resident's property.
- The loss of light to the resident's property.

**Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School,
London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)**

- The proposed height of the fence given that the resident's property is set at a lower ground level than the school.
10. The resident also objected on the grounds of the failing structural integrity of the existing adjoining wall located on the resident's side of the application area. As a result, a Structural Engineer surveyed the boundary in March 2013 and recommended that the wall is rebuilt with some remedial work to the concrete base it sits on. I was advised that the recommended works to the wall were completed on 5th June 2013.

Discussion

Introduction

11. This proposal has arisen as the result of a need for improved quality of perimeter fencing, in terms of both appearance and safety, and the overall security of the school site. The representation received has raised issues relating to the height and design of the proposed fence, as summarised in the paragraph above. The proposal needs to be considered in the context of the relevant Development Plan Policies, Government Guidance and other material planning considerations arising from consultation and publicity. In brief, the relevant planning policies promote sustainable development, seek a high standard of design, and have regard to local context and the amenity of nearby properties and the surrounding area.

Design

12. The neighbouring resident originally requested that the planning application was amended from palisade fencing to a renewed chainlink style of fencing. However, as the existing chainlink fence is now in a poor condition both structurally and visually (as shown in photograph (b)), the applicant considered that chainlink fencing would not be robust enough to meet the security requirements of the School.
13. In order to address the objection raised over the appearance of the fence, the applicant initially proposed a change to a rounded top style of palisade known as 'bull nose' to soften the appearance of the fence. However, this was still considered too visually intrusive by the resident and so the proposal was then amended to a 'weldmesh' style of fencing, which was more acceptable to the resident. *See photograph (c) the proposed weldmesh fence.* To maintain some visual continuity around the school, the proposed weldmesh fence would still be green to match the existing palisade fencing which it would adjoin at the front of the school at the boundary of the car park.
14. Following the amendment to weldmesh fencing, I do not consider that the proposal would be unacceptable in design terms and consider it would be far less visually intrusive than the palisade originally proposed.

Light Amenity

15. The amended proposal of weldmesh fencing would be more open and allow more light to penetrate through the boundary than the original proposal of palisade fencing, and significantly more than the previous 3m high plywood fence which was in place for about four years (as shown in photograph (a)). I am therefore of the opinion that the proposal as now amended would not cause an unacceptable impact on the light amenity of the neighbouring property.

Item D1

Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School, London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)

(c) Twin Wire Weldmesh Systems Fence



Fence Height

16. I viewed the proposal area from the resident's property on 10th May 2013. The ground level on their side of the boundary is lower than the school site by approximately 0.9m. Photographs (d) & (e) show the views of the school site including the 3.2 - 3.5m chainlink fence due for removal and retaining wall from the neighbouring property. Given the difference in ground level, the applicant agreed to further amend the proposal to a reduced height of 2.4m. The resident's subsequent request for a further reduction to 2.1m is not accepted by the applicant, who is of the view that a lower fence would not provide an adequate prevention or deterrent to potential intruders given that the proposal area is visible from the highway, nor be as useful for ball-stop purposes.
17. The amended fence height is a reduction of 0.6m from the 3m plywood fence previously in place; I do not consider that a further reduction of 0.3m would make a significant difference on the amenity of the neighbouring property. Given the more open nature of the weldmesh fence, I would not therefore raise an objection to the fence at the proposed height of 2.4 metres.

Item D1

**Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School,
London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)**

(d) View of the proposal area along side the neighbouring residential property



(e) View of the proposal area from neighbouring property's back garden



**Perimeter fencing, Rosherville C of E Primary School,
London Road, Northfleet – GR/13/0118 (KCC/GR/0024/2013)**

Conclusion

18. The applicant's reasons for replacing the existing fence will be noted. I am of the opinion that the erection of the proposed fence, as amended to 2.4m weldmesh, would not have a significant, detrimental impact on residential amenity. Although the height of the fence is not as low as would be desirable to the adjoining resident, the amended proposal offers improvements in terms of light amenity and visual impact from the previous boundary fencing while meeting the School's security needs, therefore I do not consider that a planning objection would be warranted in this particular case. The proposal accords with the general aims and objectives of the relevant Development Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework guidance and is in my view sustainable development. I therefore recommend that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out below.

Recommendation

19. I RECOMMEND that PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT to conditions, including conditions covering the following aspects:

- The standard time limit; and
- The development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details, plans and specifications.

Case Officer – Rachel Cutler	01622 696815
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Background documents - See section heading
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