

Committee date	Wednesday, 6 November 2019
Application reference	19/00638/FULM - Garston Park, Codicote Drive
Site address	
Proposal	Enhancement to park entrances at St Albans Road and Codicote Drive, resurfacing of existing footpaths and creation of new porous gravel footpaths around the Local Nature Reserve. Refurbishment of existing play area and erection of a new natural timber sculpture in the Nature Reserve area which will not exceed 4m high.
Applicant	Watford Borough Council
Agent	Southern Green Ltd
Type of Application	Major full planning permission
Reason for committee Item	Major application (more than 1 hectare)
Target decision date	09.08.2019 extended by agreement to 06.11.2019
Statutory publicity	Site notice and newspaper advert 30.07.2019 expiry
Case officer	Kate Pickard, kate.pickard@watford.gov.uk
Ward	; Meriden;

1. Recommendation

Grant planning permission subject to conditions detailed in section 8 of the report.

2. Site and surroundings

2.1 Garston Park is a 13 hectare public park providing green space and leisure opportunities for the community. The eastern side of the park is public open space of urban wildlife value, comprising woodland, semi improved grassland, and a watercourse with aquatic habitats. The western side is an amenity space with a play area, and open mown grass areas with a marked out grass football pitch, and a range of mature trees. There are footpaths through and around the park and a pavilion to the south side although no works are proposed to the building. The site is bounded by a railway line to the east. Residential gardens surround the site apart from the former Garston Bus Depot in the south-western corner.

3. Summary of the proposal

3.1 Proposal

3.2 Restoration work to enhance the entrances on St Alban's Road and Codicote Drive with new piers and railings. Removal of 2 no. parking spaces at the

Codicote Drive entrance. Footpath resurfacing to existing paths, and the creation of new footpaths to improve access through the park. Improvement of the play area with new inclusive equipment to appeal to a broad range of ages, a skate park and safety surfacing. Existing planting will be enhanced with the planting of new semi mature trees, new shrub areas, and a wildflower and bulb area to help increase biodiversity.

3.3 It is proposed the St Alban's Road and Codicote Drive entrances are enhanced with new brick piers, sandstone pier caps and plinths and flanked by new vertical mild steel railings. New shrub planting at these entrances will add colour and interest and a sense of arrival. The entrance style will be similar to that used in other recent park refurbishments across the Borough to create a unified identity. Existing footpaths will be improved with bitmac resurfacing, and new informal porous gravel footpaths are proposed to allow additional access around the Garston Park Local Nature Reserve.

3.4 A natural timber sculpture is proposed in the centre of the Nature reserve it will be less than 4m in height.

3.5 **Conclusion**

3.6 The proposal is fully in accordance with policy and objectives of the Watford Development Plan.

4. **Relevant policies**

Members should refer to the background papers attached to the agenda. These highlight the policy framework under which this application is determined. Specific policy considerations with regard to this particular application are detailed in section 6 below.

5. **Relevant site history/background information**

5.1 None

6. **Main considerations**

6.1 The main issues to be considered in the determination of these applications are:

- (a) Principle of use
- (b) Visual impact
- (c) Access, parking and traffic generation

(d) Impact on neighbouring properties

(e) Environmental matters

6.2 (a) Principle of use

The site is within an established open space and nature reserve as indicated on the Proposals Map of the Watford District Plan 2000.

6.3 (b) Visual impact

There is no objection in principle to the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing leisure and recreational facilities as this is not harmful to the existing character and appearance of the area. The works proposed will provide significant improvements to the park for the local community.

6.4 (c) Access, parking and traffic generation

The existing access arrangement to the site will not be altered. A new access point adjacent to the former Garston Bus Depot site is proposed as part of a residential development proposal. This additional access point will improve the access for existing residents on the western side of St. Albans Road. Overall there will be a significant improvement to pedestrian access. The proposal involves the removal of two existing parking spaces at the Codicote Drive entrance, HCC Highways noted that the removal would have no impact as other parking arrangements adjacent to the boundary of Coates Way would be retained as existing.

6.5 (d) Impact on neighbouring properties

The immediate context of the site is Garston Park which does not contain any residential properties. There are however residential properties that bound the site, it is not considered that the works would create any significant adverse impacts to neighbours.

6.6 (e) Environmental matters

Hertfordshire Ecology commented that the management of the Local Nature Reserve should be via an ecological management plan that sets out how the reserve will be managed to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Specifically they have raised concerns over the control and prevention of damage to the grassland areas resulting from the increased use and the creation of new gravel pathways through the Nature Reserve. The proposal seeks to reduce the number of pathways round and through the Nature Reserve providing benefit to the environment through less trampling of the existing grasslands. The Hertfordshire Ecology points are noted and can be secured by a pre-commencement condition.

7. Consultation responses received

7.1 Statutory consultees and other organisations

Consultee	Comment Summary	Officer Response
HCC Highways	No objection	Noted
Crime Prevention Officer	No objection content that existing safety and security plans are in place, advised the Watford Inspector and safer Neighbourhood Team.	Noted
Sport England	No objection proposal would encourage visitors to be physically active.	Noted
Environment Agency	No comments advisory note in relation to Flood risk activity permit.	Noted
Natural England	No objection advisory note.	Noted
Hertfordshire Ecology	Objection to the additional gravel pathways through the Local Nature Reserve, the siting of the proposed sculpture with a greater propensity to increase trampling of protected grassland areas. No strategy for ecological management of the site.	Noted and agreed a pre-commencement condition relating to the Garston Park Local Nature Reserve specifies that an ecological landscape and biodiversity management plan is required to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council.
Veolia Water	No comments	
Three Rivers District Council	No comments	

7.2 Internal Consultees

Consultee	Comment Summary	Officer Response
Arboricultural Officer	Proposed loss of over mature Cherry tree within new playground, loss considered acceptable due	Noted and agreed.

	to poor condition. Indicative replacement landscaping will more than compensate for this loss.	
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7.3 Interested parties

Letters were sent to 156 properties in the surrounding area. 1 objection was received. The main comments are summarised below, the full letter is available to view online:

Comments	Officer response
Installation of the skate park will detract from the quiet natural environment, and encourage noise, vandalism and graffiti.	<p>Crime Prevention Officer has no objection and is satisfied existing safety and security plans are in place. Additional tree planting and landscaping is proposed around the new facility.</p> <p>The skate park will provide additional facilities for more members of the local community.</p>

8. Recommendation

That planning permission be granted subject to the conditions listed below:

Conditions

1. Time Limit

The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country

Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Drawing numbers

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The following drawings are hereby approved:

1096_404

1096_405

1096_413 Rev B
1096_901
1096_406
1096_903
1096_200
1096_904
1096_902 REV A

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to what has been permitted and in the interests of proper planning.

Pre-Commencement Condition

3. Ecological Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan

No development shall commence on the part of the site designated as the Garson Park Local Nature Reserve, including the proposed timber sculpture, until an ecological landscape and biodiversity management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council. The plan shall set out how the reserve will conserve and enhance biodiversity. The details of the management plan shall be implemented as approved or in accordance with any subsequent variations which shall have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The management plan shall include the following elements:

- Details of the management regime for the site;
- Details of access into the reserve
- Details of the location of and access to visitor attractions within the reserve
- Details of how any impacts will be mitigated

Reason: To ensure that increased usage will not increase the trampling of the grassland, increase the disturbance to wildlife, or further degrade the biodiversity of the reserve. In the interest of supporting the habitat and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the local nature conservation value of the site to meet the requirements of Policies GI1, GI2, GI3 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-2031.

4. Materials

All the external surfaces of the development shall be finished in materials of the type, colour, texture and style as specified in the drawings approved by Condition 3 unless otherwise approved in writing by the local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site, pursuant to Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan: Core Strategy 2006 - 31.

Informatives

IN907 Consideration of proposal in a positive and proactive manner

IN910 Building Regulations

IN912 Hours of Construction