

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE DATE: 2 April 2008

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APPLICATION REF. NO: 08/00170/DC

STATUTORY DECISION DATE: 20 April 2008

WARD/PARISH: COCKERTON EAST

LOCATION: Sugar Hill Park, Prior Street, Darlington

DESCRIPTION: Installation of metal archway features to three entrances, 4 No. metal benches, replacement weldmesh type fencing and handrails fitted to entrance on Stooperdale Avenue

APPLICANT: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

This is an application submitted under Regulations 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for improvements to Sugar Hill Park. The works consist of:

- The erection of three metal archway features to the existing entrances;
- The introduction of four metal benches;
- The erection of 2.43m high mesh fencing between the Park and the allotments to the north;
- The erection of 1.5m high round bar fencing on the Prior Street frontage;
- The erection of a handrail at the Stooperdale Avenue entrance.

Sugar Hill Park is located on the junction with Stooperdale Avenue and Prior Street. It is within a predominately residential area.

In July 2007, Groundworks, in partnership with the Council, carried out a door to door consultation exercise with 32 residents as well as further events in the Park and the local community centre. Residents mentioned that they would like to see safer access into the Park, more seating and would like it more welcoming to users. A consultation event took place in February 2008 which was attended by 18 residents and the feedback was positive stating that the proposed plans were attractive and would improve the look of the Park.

PLANNING HISTORY

None.

PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

The following policies within the Borough of Darlington Local Plan are relevant:

- E3 - Protection of Open Land
- E42 - Street Furniture
- E46 - Safety and Security
- R1 - Designing For All
- R4 - Open Space Provision

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

One letter of objection has been received raising the following concerns:

- *The proposed metal archway is imposing, obtrusive and frankly has the potential to become an eyesore. Our home, 31 Stooperdale Avenue, is exactly opposite the entrance with the front of our property facing the park. The archway has been proposed as a means of improving the park but it does not achieve that aim;*
- *In the last 8 years we have had to suffer many problems with antisocial behaviour at this park entrance, for example, underage drinking resulting in large groups of teenagers gathering here using foul language, being verbally abusive and climbing the trees, railings, posts and barriers causing damage. Adults and teenagers use the corner of the park as a public toilet. Many of these instances have had to involve the police;*
- *The proposed entrance will offer an increased opportunity for this antisocial behaviour to take place;*
- *Who will provide the funding to repair/replace the damage caused;*
- *The proposed fencing is visually obtrusive and will further detract from the potential attractiveness of the park or its surroundings;*
- *Both children and teenagers have historically used the weldmesh fencing at this park for climbing upon, over and through causing the fencing to become damaged and eventually collapse. The type of fencing proposed was removed from the park several years ago in a serious state of collapse due to damage and neglect.*

PLANNING ISSUES

The principal issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:

- Planning Policy
- Residential amenity and Security Issues
- Visual amenity and impact on the character and appearance of the locality

Planning Policy

Policy E3 (Protection of Open Land) of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan is a criteria based policy that requires due regard to be had to the maintenance and enhancement of the usefulness, appearance and nature conservation interest of any open land within the borough. The policy goes on to state that any development that inflicts material harm on, inter alia, the visual relief provided by such areas; the character and appearance of the locality through loss of open spaces and greenery; facilities for organised sports, formal or informal recreation which contribute to

meet other objectives of the development plan; internal continuity, linkages and nature conservation interests, will not be granted.

Policy R4 (Open Space Provision) seeks to ensure that the provision of all forms of open space for recreation within the urban area, to include parks and informal amenity space, is maintained in accordance with an overall standard.

The development is considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to detailed matters of development control, which are considered in the remaining sections of this report.

Residential Amenity and Security Issues

One of the main concerns raised by the objector relates to existing levels of anti social behaviour and that the proposal would not improve the situation. Crime prevention is a material consideration in determining planning applications. Groundworks have taken into account the issue of crime when designing the proposal and consider that the improvement works will make the Park more welcoming, with its own identity to attract families and create a safer environment. The weldmesh fencing will offers high levels of security to the allotments and will be highly durable. Dwellings overlook the Park and the style of perimeter fencing would not prevent this natural surveillance. A copy of the objection letter has been forwarded to Groundworks.

Visual Appearance

The Park is enclosed on the Stooperdale Avenue and Prior Street frontages by a low hedgerow. It is separated from the allotments to the north by a mesh and concrete post fence, which is falling into disrepair. The three existing entrances consist of concrete pillars. The 3m high ornate metal archways would be situated on the three entrances into the park and the metal seats would be placed in various locations along the internal footpath network. The perimeter fencing on the street frontages would be 1.5m high round bar fencing, painted black. The weldmesh fencing which creates the boundary with the allotments would be 2.43m high and painted green.

The proposal would improve the visual appearance of the park and enhance the surrounding area.

SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

Groundworks have considered the issue of crime and crime prevention in the design of proposed works. The proposed development has been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. The proposed development does not give rise to crime and disorder issues.

CONCLUSION

Following the responses from the consultations with local residents, this application has been submitted with its fundamental aim to provide a better, safer and more attractive area of public open space. The objectors concerns have been taken into account but it is considered that the proposal would not significantly increase the problems, which have been experienced. The following policies within the Borough of Darlington Local Plan have been considered:

E3 - Protection of Open Land

E42 - Street Furniture
E46 - Safety and Security
R1 - Designing For All
R4 - Open Space Provision

RECOMMENDATION

THAT PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO REGULATION 3 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING GENERAL REGULATIONS 1992 AND SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- 1) A3 Implementation Limit (Three Years)
- 2) B5 Detailed Drawings (Accordance with Plan)

SUGGESTED SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION

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