

Item No. 19**SCHEDULE C**

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/09/05330/FULL
LOCATION	Northill Lower School, Bedford Road, Northill, Biggleswade, SG18 9AH
PROPOSAL	Full: Erection of fitness trail on school playing field
PARISH	Northill
WARD	Northill & Blunham
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllr C Maudlin & Cllr T Turner
CASE OFFICER	Kate Phillips
DATE REGISTERED	15 July 2009
EXPIRY DATE	09 September 2009
APPLICANT	Northill Lower School
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	The land is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Full Conditional Approval

Site Location:

The application site is Northill Lower School on Bedford Road in Northill, opposite St Mary's Church on the north side of the road. The main school building is a single storey red brick building within Northill Conservation Area. There is a small car-park to the side (west) and the school playground and playing field are to the rear (north) outside the conservation area but still within Northill Settlement Envelope.

The general area is residential in character. The cemetery is to the west of the school's site, to the north is open countryside and the eastern boundary of the school's site is lined with residential dwellings, some of which are listed.

The Application:

This application seeks permission for the erection of a fitness trail on the school playing field.

The fitness trail, which is made of wooden equipment attached to the ground, would comprise of the following 8 different sections and would be located around the edge of the school playing field, in such a way to minimise its impact both visually and upon adjacent properties:

- 1) Twin balance beam
- 2) Zig-zag stepper
- 3) Rocking log
- 4) Cross beams
- 5) Sit Ups
- 6) Chin ups

- 7) Log beam
- 8) Traversing wall

Items number 1 to 3 would be situated along the western boundary of the playing field, numbers 4 to 6 would be situated along the northern boundary and numbers 7 and 8 would be situated in the gap formed between the multi-use games area and the rear boundary of the gardens along Thorncote Road.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Policies (PPG + PPS)

PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

Regional Spatial Strategy

East of England Plan (May 2008)

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (March 2005)

Bedfordshire Structure Plan 2011

Not applicable

Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review 2005

Policy DPS6 - Extensions and alterations

Policy DPS15 - Important Open Space

South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review Policies

Not applicable

Supplementary Planning Guidance

None

Planning History

MB/08/02296/FULL	Full: Replacement of existing flat-roof bay windows with new pitched-roof bay windows. - Full Conditional Approval
MB/05/01313/FULL	Full: Formation of multi use games area with mesh fencing - Full Conditional Approval
MB/05/00554/FULL	Full: Formation of all weather Surface multi-use games area with mesh fencing - Refused
MB/04/01945/FULL	Full: Formation of all weather surface multi-use games area including mesh fencing and floodlighting. - Refused
MB/04/00631/CC	County Council: Erection of double garage for storage purposes.
MB/99/00606/FA	FULL: ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AND EXISTING DOORWAY BRICKED UP. EXTENSION OF EXISTING HARD PLAY AREA. - Full Conditional Approval

**Representations:
(Parish & Neighbours)**

Northill PC	No objection
Adj. occupiers	One letter of objection has been raised. The main points are summarised below: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Want the course to be used only by children and within normal school hours (no weekends)• Concerns with the location of the wall - the school have stated in the parish magazine that it will not be visible however it will be visible from 11 Thorncote Road• Children using the wall will be able to see into the garden at number 11 Thorncote Road which would be an invasion of privacy• The occupants will not change their lifestyles as a result of the wall and therefore it will be the school's responsibility if a child sees something unacceptable• The position of the wall will prevent proper supervision of it• If a child hurts themselves an ambulance cannot reach the field because parking in the car-park prevents access

Consultations/Publicity responses

Site notice posted	30.7.09
Biggleswade Chronicle	24.7.09

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

1. The effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
2. The impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties
3. Any other implications of the proposal

Considerations**1. Effect on the character and appearance of the area**

The wooden fitness trail would be located within the school grounds and would not be visible in the public realm surrounding the school. It might be visible from the area of open countryside to the north or the cemetery to the west, and an objection has been raised on the grounds that it would be visible from one of the properties on Thorncote Road, but nevertheless it is not considered that it would appear incongruous or out of keeping with its surroundings because one would expect to see play/ climbing equipment in the grounds of a school. Furthermore the 8 items of equipment have been sited to minimise their visual impact upon the surrounding area, at the edge of the playing fields along the boundaries where they would not appear

prominent against their backgrounds.

Overall therefore it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area, in accordance with Policy DPS6 of the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review 2005.

2. Impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties

A letter of objection has been received from number 11 Thorncote Road on various grounds. Firstly, the owners of number 11 would like the course to be used only by children and within normal school hours. Although use of the multi-use games area is restricted to staff and pupils of the school and only between certain hours it is not considered necessary to restrict the use of the fitness trail in such a way. This is due to the fact there are no restrictions on the school playing field and it would therefore be difficult to enforce this type of condition on equipment that is freely accessible to users of the field.

The owners of number 11 also have concerns with the location of item number 8, the traversing wall (which would be 1.75 metres tall and 2.2 metres wide). They believe that although the school have stated it will not be visible, it will in fact be visible from 11 Thorncote Road. Although this might be the case, as already noted, this type of equipment is not uncommon within the grounds of a school and it would not cause any problems in terms of loss of light or overbearing impact to this property. Another concern they have with the wall is that children using it will be able to see into the garden at 11 Thorncote Road which would be an invasion of privacy. If used properly, as demonstrated on the manufacturer's literature submitted with the application, it is not thought that children would be able to see into any neighbouring gardens whilst using the wall. If the wall is 1.75 metres tall (much taller than a child) and children use it to climb along (as opposed to up) they should only look into the side of the wall as opposed to across into any gardens. Furthermore, given that the wall would mainly be used during PE classes or at school play time, even if it was possible to use the wall to gain a view into neighbouring gardens, the relatively small amount of time that children could potentially look into the gardens from the wall is considered to be acceptable.

The occupants at number 11 also believe the position of the wall will prevent proper supervision of it, and if a child hurts themselves an ambulance would not be able to reach the field because parking in the car-park prevents access. This type of equipment is designed for use by school children and therefore it is not considered very likely that accidents severe enough to require an ambulance would occur. If any type of accident was to occur within the school grounds an ambulance would presumably park outside the front and the paramedics could gain access on foot to any part of the school's site.

Overall, given the nature and scale of the proposal, it is not considered that the fitness trail would detrimentally impact upon the residential amenity of any nearby properties to such a degree as to warrant a refusal of the application on these grounds and therefore the proposal is considered to be acceptable from this perspective.

3. Any other implications

The school playing field is classified as Important Open Space on the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review 2005 Proposal Maps. It is not considered that the erection of the fitness trail around the outskirts of the playing field would constitute a material loss of open space and therefore the proposal is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policy DPS15 of the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review 2005.

Reasons for Granting

The proposal to erect a fitness trail within the grounds of the school on the playing field would not impact detrimentally on either the character and appearance of the surrounding area or upon the residential amenity of any nearby residential dwellings. The scheme therefore, by reason of its site, design and location, is in conformity with Planning Policy Statement 1 (2005), East of England Plan (May 2008), Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (March 2005) and Policies DPS6 and DPS15 of the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review (2005).

- 1 The development hereby approved shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which is designed to ensure that a planning permission does not continue in existence indefinitely if the development to which it relates is not carried out.

DECISION

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