

**Item A. 1                      07/01055/FULMAJ                      Permit Full Planning Permission**

**Case Officer                      Mr David Stirzaker**

**Ward                                      Lostock**

**Proposal                              Proposed construction of a new access road and car parking area and development of grazing agricultural land into a playing field.**

**Location                              Bishop Rawstone C Of E International Language College Out Lane Croston LancashirePR26 9HJ**

**Applicant                              Board Of Governors**

**Proposal**                              This application relates to Bishop Rawstone C of E International Language College in Croston and proposes the creation of a new primary access road to the school from Highfield Road, a bus drop off area, rationalisation of the existing car parking spaces and the change of use of an existing agricultural field to a playing field.

**Background**                              This application follows the submission and withdrawal of an earlier application (Ref No. 07/00659/FUL), which proposed the same development but did not include the change of use of the adjacent field to a playing field. Sport England raised an objection to the application as the access road bisected the existing playing field thus resulting in a loss of available playing field space. This current application has been amended to include the change of use of the adjacent field from agriculture to playing field to mitigate the loss of playing field space caused by the access.

**Applicants Case**                              The applicants Design & Access Statement sets out the need for the development proposed. In this, the applicant states that as existing, the use of Out Lane, which is a single width road of poor quality tarmac with no pavement causes a significant amount of congestion in the village of Croston. Larger service vehicles visiting the college can also cause considerable obstruction.

The applicant states that the proposal will create a new access route to the College via Highfield Road and the existing bus drop off point. The development will construct a high quality access road and include the rationalisation of the Colleges car parking arrangements via the construction of a new car park area next to the school. The landscaping works that are to be incorporated within the project will limit the visual impact of the new parking areas.

The applicant states that the new access road will benefit the local community by reducing traffic congestion in Croston, providing a safer pedestrian access to the College, providing better onsite parking facilities for community functions and providing a safer access for larger vehicles that regularly provide services and supplies to the college.

The applicant also states that the access road will benefit the

College by improving the parking available to staff, providing safer circulation of vehicles on site, improving the provision for bus transportation, creating a new playground area and providing better and safer access for the college.

**Planning Policy**

GN5 - Building Design  
DC1 - Development in the Green Belt  
EP4 - Species Protection  
EP18 - Surface Water Run Off  
TR4 - Highway Development Control Criteria  
LT14 - Recreational Open Space  
LT16 - Dual Use of Education Facilities  
PPG2 - Green Belts  
Policy 7 - Parking Standards (JLSP)

**Planning History**

Creation of coach park with footpath link to Out Lane (Ref No. 98/00809/FUL) Permitted

Construction of new technology block and new science block including alterations to existing building & relocation of garage (Ref No. 98/00810/FUL) Permitted

Erection of single storey classroom extension to house an IT suite, two storey general classroom block extension, new sports hall and conversion/remodelling work to existing gym (Ref No. 01/01001/FUL) Permitted

Change of use of agricultural land to two full size football pitches with training area (Ref No. 06/00005/COU) Refused

Change of use of agricultural land to two full size football pitches with training area (Ref No. 06/00638/COU) Refused

Proposed construction of a new access road and car parking area (Ref No. 07/00659/FUL) Withdrawn

**Consultations**

LCC (Highways) raise no objections to the principle of the application.

LCC (Directorate for Children & Young People) raise no objections.

Sport England raise no objections.

The Architectural Liaison Officer raises no objections.

The Head of Public Space Services expresses support for the application.

Consultation responses from the Environment Agency and United Utilities have not yet been received. Any comments received will be reported in the Addendum.

**Representations**

To date, 28 letters of support have been received. The contents of these letters can be summarised as follows: -

- The use of Out Lane has increased significantly over the past few years with it being the main access road for Bishop Rawstone College and Trinity & St Michaels School
- Out Lane does not have a pavement for significant stretches and it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs
- Out Lane was never designed to accommodate the level of traffic it currently supports
- Congratulations should be given to the college for trying to resolve this clear and obvious problem
- It is baffling why proper access to the college has not been provided sooner and why it has been allowed to expand to its current size without a dedicated access
- The Parish Council have made many requests to LCC for traffic calming measures on Out Lane, an issue which has been around for many years although even with a 20mph speed limit, congestion and blockages would persist
- The proposals will bring improvements to the vast majority of Croston residents, enhance the Conservation Area of central Croston for visitors and residents, resolve a number of local conflicts and provide an opportunity for the enhancement of the wider environment
- The amenity of residents on Town Lane and Out Lane would be greatly enhanced by the proposal
- Out Lane is no longer suitable to serve a modern secondary school
- The proposed development would allow Out Lane to become a safe route to school encouraging walking and cycling

To date, 5 letters of objection have been received. The contents of these letters can be summarised as follows: -

- The proposal will lead to more congestion, noise and disturbance and on road parking
- Traffic congestion is already and as access is already difficult, parents will still utilise Highfield Road
- The proposed new playing field should not add to the existing congestion on Highfield Road
- The 3m wide buffer strip is not considered sufficient to safeguard the amenities of nearby residents and the type of fencing used needs to be appropriate to the area
- The additional playing field will lead to the adjacent properties being overlooked, losing privacy and being subjected to excessive noise and disturbance
- The amount of rubbish within the school grounds could increase due to the playing field being adjacent residential properties
- Disturbance will not be confined to school hours as numerous after school activities take place all year round
- During September alone, the school had football practice on a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday until 8 o'clock in the evening

- If the proposed running track was provided pupils would run passed the adjacent garden areas every few minutes
- The re-positioned running track and new access road would seriously affect the tranquillity enjoyed by the occupiers of adjacent properties
- The proposed development would seriously affect the character and appearance of the area
- Much of the traffic on Highfield Road ignores the 30mph speed limit
- Without the management of traffic, parking and speeding in the main, the access would add to the already severe road traffic dangers at this point

A letter has also been received from Lea, Hough & Co on behalf of the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance stating that an agricultural tenant requires access through the school car park from Out Lane into a field to the adjacent the school site and that if the closure of Out Lane is with a lockable gate, no objections are raised.

## **Assessment**

The pertinent issues warranting consideration are as follows:

1. Planning Policy;
2. Impact on the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area;
3. Residential amenities;
4. Highways issues, and;
5. Ecological Issues.

### Planning Policy

The site is in the Green Belt hence for the access to be 'in principle' acceptable, the applicant must demonstrate that 'very special circumstances' exist that override the presumption against development other than that relating to outdoor sport and agriculture/forestry set out in PPG2 and Policy DC1.

In this case, the applicant states that the new access would benefit the community by reducing traffic congestion in the centre of Croston, provide safer pedestrian access to the College, provide better onsite parking facilities for community functions, and provide safer access for large vehicles that regularly provide services and supplies to the college. The scheme will also benefit the College by improving parking facilities available to staff, provide safer circulation of vehicles on site, improving the provision for bus transportation, providing additional hard play areas and providing a safer way to access the college.

The above are considered to constitute 'very special circumstances' hence the principle of the access and car parking proposals are accepted. Moreover, in the preamble to Policy LT16, it is specifically stated that the Council will support any proposals for access improvements to the College that would enable further dual use of facilities.

In relation to the issue with the previous matter regarding the loss of existing playing field space, the proposed change of use of the adjacent field overcomes this concern and Sport England no longer object to the application as there will be no net loss of available playing field space.

### Impact on the Green Belt and Character and Appearance of the Area

As detailed in the Policy section of this report, the applicants 'very special circumstances' are considered to outweigh the normal development restraint policy set out in PPG2 and Policy DC1. This being the case, the principle of the development is acceptable but nonetheless, the impact of the development on the open and rural character of the Green Belt still warrants assessment.

The access road to the school will bisect the playing field. However, the access serves a large school site hence it is not so unreasonable as to require suitable access and such features are not uncommon when serving school sites in the Green Belt. Notwithstanding this, school site boundary to the west and south is also the boundary with the Croston settlement area and the site is not one that is isolated and surrounded by open countryside in the Green Belt. The field across which the road will run is fairly level hence the main elements of the development visible will be ancillary fences and lighting though the details of these will be the subject of pre-commencement conditions so as suitable details can be secured.

The additional bus drop off area will in part be screened from Highfield Road behind existing trees and shrubs and again abuts the Croston settlement boundary.

The additional parking area is sited close to the school buildings and landscaping is to be provided around the periphery of this area, which should help to mitigate its outward impact. The change of use of the field will not have any impact on the Green Belt.

It is not therefore considered that the development proposed will have a detrimental impact upon the open and rural character of the Green Belt.

### Residential Amenities

The access from Highfield Road will become the primary access to the school hence the amount of vehicular and pedestrian activity will obviously intensify. However, Highfield Road is a busy road serving as one of the primary routes into and out of Croston and as existing the bus drop off area will generate a significant amount of noise and disturbance during the mornings and evenings. If anything, the proposed facilities should encourage more vehicles to enter the site and this view is concurred with by LCC (Highways) hence the noise and disturbance generated by the proposal on Highfield Road should be reduced. The additional bus drop off area is also well

screened from the properties to the east on Highfield Road by virtue of a well established area of tree planting and noise and disturbance from it should not be significantly greater than existing. On this basis, it is not considered that an objection on noise and disturbance could be sustained.

In terms of the buffer zone width, the originally proposed 3m width is to be increased to 10m and the applicant is in the process of preparing amended plans to reflect this. This is considered sufficient to ensure the levels of privacy adjacent residents currently enjoy are not detrimentally harmed through overlooking or noise and disturbance. Also, a condition is recommended requiring the school to agree in writing with the Council how the additional playing field is marked out hence its use for team sports such as football and rugby can be prohibited.

### Highways

LCC (Highways) state that the new access will bring considerable relief to Out Lane by removing approximately 100 staff vehicles each day along with service vehicles. Members should note that the large number of letters supporting the application place great emphasis on the existing problems with the school access from Out Lane in terms of congestion, pedestrian safety and highway safety hence this is obviously a long standing issue to which resolution is welcomed.

A condition closing the Out Lane access concurrent with the opening of the new access is recommended although a letter has been received on behalf of a tenant farmer whose field access is through the school car park hence access is required. Accordingly, the condition requiring the closure of the access requires the submission of details and prohibits vehicular traffic associated with the school and community uses of the facilities only and by virtue of its wording does not prohibit a farmer using the access.

It is acknowledged that the access will increase vehicular activity on Highfield Road but with the provision to drop off pupils within the site and the additional bus drop off/pick up area and with suitable road markings and additional signage on Highfield Road, LCC (Highways) state that there should not be congestion at the access.

It is also stated that a management strategy will be needed to ensure the safe routing of pupils between the two bus drop off areas and also to ensure its general operation at school opening and closing times. This could be incorporated into a school travel plan, which is also considered necessary and will be the subject of a suitable condition.

On the basis of these comments from LCC (Highways), it is considered from a highways perspective that the proposals are acceptable and will help to alleviate long standing problems associated with the use of Out Lane.

### Ecological Issues

LCC (Ecology) have commented that the application should not be determined until a survey for Great Crested Newts has been

undertaken. In relation to this, the route of the new access runs over the existing playing field which would be the subject of regular mowing and maintenance hence it is unlikely it would provide a suitable habitat. In relation to the proposal to change the use of the adjoining field, the applicant states that to make it suitable for use as a playing field, only minimal works will be required such as filling in any potholes and drainage if deemed necessary. This field could be ploughed and used for crop growing without any control from the Council hence its use as a playing field will have significantly less impact than for agricultural purposes. On this basis, it is considered appropriate to impose a condition requiring the submission of drainage details that is worded in such a way that allows the Council to require a Great Crested Newt survey and mitigation measures if the works could impact on habitats based on the details submitted under the said condition.

**Conclusion** On the basis of the above, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

**Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission Conditions**

1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

*Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.*

2. No development shall take place until a scheme of landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, notwithstanding any such detail which may have previously been submitted. The scheme shall indicate all existing trees and hedgerows on the land; detail any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development; indicate the types and numbers of trees and shrubs to be planted, their distribution on site, those areas to be seeded, paved or hard landscaped; and detail any changes of ground level or landform.

*Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the area and in accordance with Policy No.GN5 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

3. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of any buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

*Reason: In the interest of the appearance of the locality and in accordance with Policy No GN5 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

4. The marking out of the additional playing field area hereby permitted shall only be carried out in accordance with a scheme which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and all subsequent changes to the marking out of the field must also first be detailed on a plan and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before being changed.

*Reason: In the interests of the amenities of nearby residents and in accordance with Policy No. GN5 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

5. Prior to the commencement of development, details of the proposed surface water drainage arrangements for the new playing field shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If the drainage works are considered to result in substantial disturbance to the ground by the Council, a survey to establish whether or not Great Crested Newts are present in the field must be carried out and submitted to the

Local Planning Authority for consideration following the submission of the drainage details and should include mitigation measures to protect Great Crested Newts during the course of the works to the field if the survey dictates they are necessary. The drainage scheme shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details and the mitigation measures set out in the Great Crested Newt report, if the survey dictates they are necessary, must be implemented in full before and during the course of construction.

*Reason: To secure proper drainage and to prevent flooding and in accordance with Policy Nos. EP18 and EP19 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

6. Before the development hereby permitted is first commenced full details of existing and proposed ground levels (all relative to ground levels adjoining the site) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, notwithstanding any such detail shown on the approved plans. The development shall only be carried out in conformity with the approved details.

*Reason: To protect the appearance of the locality, in the interests of the amenities of local residents and in accordance with Policy No. GN5 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

7. Before the use of the new access to the school from Highfield Road hereby permitted is first commenced, the car parking spaces marked out on the area identified as number 4 on the attached Proposed Development Area plan (ref: Job No. 206/5129 Dwg No. 02) shall have been removed and the area made available as play space and the approved car park and vehicle manoeuvring areas shall be surfaced or paved, drained and marked out all in accordance with the approved plan. The car park and vehicle manoeuvring areas shall not thereafter be used for any purpose other than the parking of and manoeuvring of vehicles.

*Reason: To ensure adequate on site provision of car parking and manoeuvring areas and in accordance with Policy No. TR4 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

8. Prior to the first use of the new access to the school, the existing vehicular access from Out Lane shall have been permanently closed to all vehicular traffic associated with the school and the community use of its facilities, in accordance with a scheme, which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The access shall remain closed at all times thereafter to vehicular traffic associated with the school and the community uses of its facilities.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policy No. TR4 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

9. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of all lighting (notwithstanding any details shown the approved plans), which should be low level, shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include a full schedule of installation and equipment design, the position of the lighting within the site and calculations to determine glare, aim, intensity and spill.

*Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development and in accordance with Policy Nos. DC1 and GN5 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

10. Prior to the first use of the access hereby permitted, additional road safety marking and signage, funded by the applicant, adjacent to the access along Highfield Road shall have been implemented in full accordance with a scheme, which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Lancashire County Council.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policy No. TR4 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

11. Within 6 months of the date of the first use of the new vehicular access from Highfield Road, the additional playing field facilitated by the change of use of the existing agricultural field shown on the approved site plan shall have been made available as a playing field.

*Reason: To ensure adequate play space is available and in accordance with Policy No. LT14 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.*

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