

Application Number 17/02468

Date to Director n/a

Proposed erection of a 6FE Secondary Boys School comprising a part 2 storey, part 3 storey school building of 8,443m² including a sports hall (also for wider community use) together with hard and soft landscaping, creation of a new vehicular access on Chislehurst Road, 69 parking spaces, drop off/pick up area and associated works. Erection of a temporary 2 storey classroom block on site for 12 months to accommodate 5 classrooms, a laboratory, offices and toilets.

St Hughes Playing Fields Bickley Road

(comments following the Appeal Decision on planning application ref 16/03315)

Director (E&CS) Observations

Previous history

16/03315

The 2016 application was refused on the ground that “The potential traffic generation and capacity of the existing highway network along with the proposed access arrangements raise both road and pedestrian safety concerns that have not been fully addressed in the proposal and are likely to cause severe cumulative impacts contrary to Policy T18 of the Unitary Development Plan 2006 and paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012”.

The refused application was appealed and the Inspector’s Decision Notice has now been issued. The appeal was dismissed and the Inspector concluded that “...the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety and that it would thus conflict with UDP Policy T18 and the Framework.”

The 2017 was also recommended for refusal but Members resolved to permit the application.

The question is whether the Inspector has raised any new points that were not considered as part of the 2017 application and whether they are relevant to that application.

Bickley Road exit

The Inspector conducted a site visit and raised a number of issues in his Decision Notice. He identified longer queues in the afternoon going towards the Bickley Road / Chislehurst Road roundabout than were shown in the Applicant’s surveys. These queues went past the exit from the site onto Bickley Road. His main concern was given in para 9 of the Decision Notice where he said:

“Such an exit movement would need to cross the eastbound traffic on Bickley Road during peak times and could have to join a queue of traffic in the westbound direction caused by a lack of capacity in the existing highway network. This movement would not take place under managed circumstances, as would be the case at a roundabout, but would rely on the courtesy of drivers in the queue and possibly those travelling eastbound on Bickley Road. This, when combined with the frequency at which the movement would have to be made to accommodate traffic generated by the proposal, would result in a severe and unacceptable impact in terms of highway safety and

suitability for those accessing the site. This would conflict with paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework and UDP1 Policy T18.”

Queue lengths are likely to vary on a day to day basis, particularly when a junction is nearing or at capacity. The applicant's survey showed lengthy queues here during the AM peak between 7:50am until the end of the survey at 8:30am. The queue may also extend past the site at other times of the day including at the time of the Inspector's site visit.

The potential for road works to have affected the queuing and traffic conditions on Bickley Road on the day of the site visit (15/11/17) has been raised. There were 2 such locations in the vicinity of the application site, a road closure by the railway bridge in Yester Road and temporary lights in Bromley Road, Chislehurst. There was also a closure of the London bound carriageway of the A20 between Frognaal Corner and Fiveways due to diesel spill. There were substantial delays in the morning through Chislehurst associated with the temporary lights on Bromley Road which were removed around midday. Whether there would have been any knock-on effects from any of these works on Bickley Road during the afternoon of the Inspector's site visit is very difficult to ascertain.

The safety aspects of the proposed vehicular exit involving a right turn manoeuvre were not raised in the previous Highway comments.

On Street Parking

The Inspector then suggested that (para 10):

A further consequence of these circumstances would be that school related drivers, who would be likely to be very regular in their arrangements, may not choose to use the route through the site due to the nature of its exit and the potential for delay. This could mean that pupils would be dropped-off and picked-up on the surrounding roads.

In terms of the effect of the potential on-street parking the Inspector noted (para 11):

On Bickley Road, frequent vehicle stops for such purposes would be incompatible with the strategic nature of the road and its peak queuing. On Chislehurst Road, the limited width of the road, the absence of any footway to one side and peak queuing would carry an unacceptable risk of pedestrian or vehicle conflict when vehicles stop to drop-off or pick-up. Furthermore, this road is a yellow route on the London Cycle Network, which denotes a recommended quieter route. The dropping-off or picking-up would be likely to conflict with the aims of this designation in terms of the hazards presented by short term waiting vehicles. Pines Road would be some distance from the main entrances to the school and would be less likely to be so used. As a result of all of the above, the proposal would have a severe and unacceptable cumulative impact on highway safety on Bickley Road and Chislehurst Road which are already subject to a lack of capacity at peak times.

A yellow cycle route is defined on the TfL Local Cycling Guide 11 as “other roads that may have been recommended by cyclists that may connect other route sections.” It is not a formally designated or signed route and there are no plans to make it one. The level of usage is not likely to be high.

Short term parking around schools is difficult to prevent, even with yellow line

restrictions, and the Inspector has acknowledged this (para 12)

“In terms of the limited vehicle stop times to drop-off or pick-up, this interaction would be difficult to regulate.”

The issues of short term on-street parking for drop off / pick up were raised in the Highways comments as part of objection ground previously.

Proposed no-right turn

In order to overcome the Inspector’s concern a plan has been submitted showing how a banned right turn from the Bickley Road exit could work with alterations to the layout. That plan is acceptable in principle subject to detailed design and a Road Safety Audit and could be subject to condition.

There seem to be 2 likely scenarios with this proposal.

(i) those drivers who wanted to turn right are unlikely to go through the site as the diversion route via either Pines Road / Chislehurst Road or Page Heath Lane / Bird in Hand Lane would be between 1.2 – 1.5km depending on the route the vehicles are taking. The alternative is to park on the road to drop off and pick up pupils which is likely to take place close to the accesses on Chislehurst Road or Bickley Road.

(ii) given these are drivers who use the access on a daily basis, there are some that may still try and turn right. The proposed access will be designed to encourage drivers to turn right and a right turn ban will be in place.

Conclusions

The Inspector’s Decision Notice does not overcome the previous Highway objections to the proposed site in respect of sub-standard pedestrian facilities in Chislehurst Road and the effects of potential short term on-street parking in Chislehurst Road and Bickley Road. These were considered at the Committee meeting on 4th Oct 2017.

The now proposed right turn ban from the Bickley Road exit would overcome the Inspector’s main concern although it is likely to have knock- on effects as outlined above which may impact on the highway network.

Mike Hammond
Highway Development Engineer
18th January 2018