

2154 Chancellor's School, Hertfordshire.

Chancellor's School

Additional Temporary Parking Places

Planning Application Submission, September 2020

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



Background

Chancellor's School is a mixed 11-18 secondary school academy with sixth form located in Brookmans Park in Hertfordshire. The school has an excellent reputation for providing the very best education for all its students. The school has a current mixed intake of approximately 1200 boys and girls aged 11-18 years.

In 2017 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) identified an increased demand for secondary spaces in the area. Given the lack of alternatives for Hatfield, the expansion of Chancellor's was considered essential. Therefore in the Spring Term of 2018 Chancellor's school agreed to admit an additional 30 pupils to each year group from September 2019 onwards.

To plan for the necessary expansion, the scope and organisation of the existing buildings was reviewed and it was determined that significantly greater numbers of pupils attended the school than it was originally designed for. A shortfall of classroom spaces as well as the areas of teaching space was placing a strain on already limited undersized facilities; and with the promise of an additional 210 pupils, the provision of additional accommodation was deemed critical.

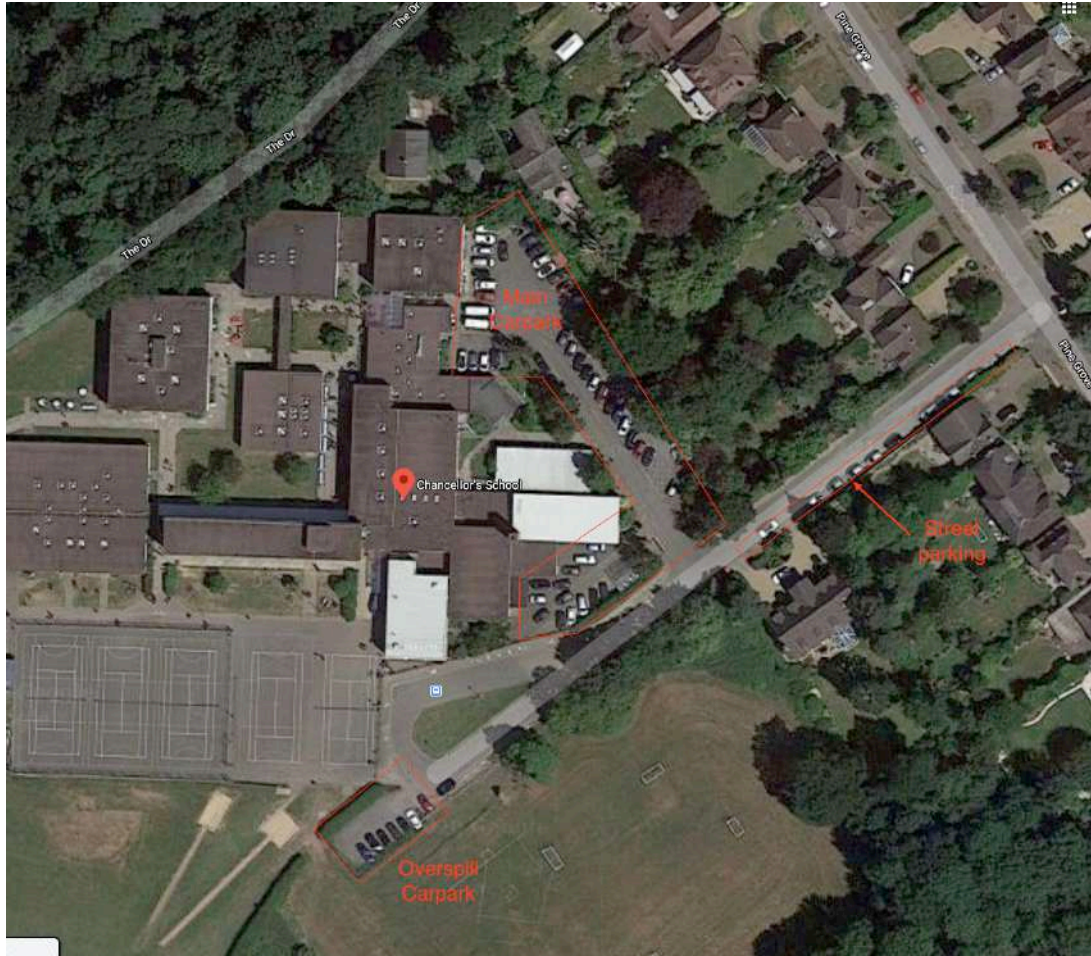
Lyster Grillet & Harding Ltd (LGH) were appointed to design and deliver a single new build block to provide 7 classrooms and Sports Hall facilities, as well as a replacement hard-play sports pitch area and additional parking spaces.

As part of the previously approved development proposals additional drop-off parking bays will be implemented along the school access road. This is to be provided as part of the approved works on site at present alongside an additional 33 car parking spaces, to alleviate historic staff parking congestion along the school access road, therefore providing more capacity for parent pick up/drop off, whilst improving circulation during the busiest periods.

Planning approval ref 6/2019/0085/MAJ was granted for these works on 18th July 2019. The construction of this project is still ongoing and the new 33 carparking spaces will not be made available until 2021.

As such the school is still in short supply of car parking on their site and often the overspill are forced to park on the roads in front of nearby properties causing tension with the local residents. This was evidenced in the strength of response from the residents during the initial planning application.

Currently, the entrance to the school leads to the school's main car park, this has a capacity of 63 car parking spaces which becomes fully occupied quickly during school opening times. There is an additional car park used as overspill parking at the end of the school access road that has capacity for 7 more vehicles and the rest is informal street parking along the access road and Pine Grove. The school finds street parking on the access road causes problems with the flow of traffic and reduces the pedestrian path way.



Current Parking sites at Chancellor's School



Existing Parking at Chancellor's School

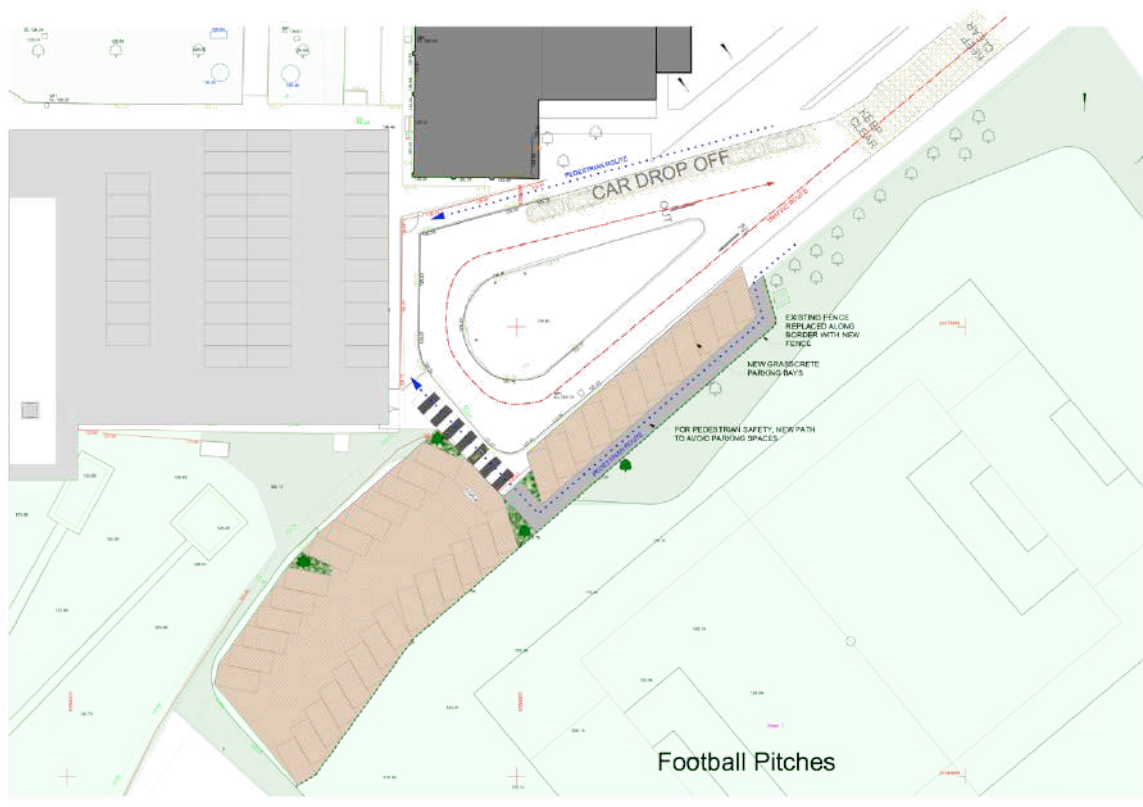
In acknowledgement of the issues associated with restricted parking at the school this planning application is to expand the small overspill inefficient car park on a temporary basis until such times as the previously approved additional car parking has been provided and the proposals of the approved Travel Plan have also been implemented. Whilst the provision of additional car parking has been

specifically proposed to address existing shortfalls together with increased demand arising from increased numbers of pupil/teachers there is now a very real, heightened pressure on parking arising from the current Covid-19 pandemic. Additional car journeys and therefore parking requirements are increased due to the current Covid measures and staff/parents/students not using public transport or car sharing opportunities. This is not a situation anyone could have envisaged however given current Government guidance this is only likely to get worse over forthcoming months.

New additional car parking spaces are now urgently required to compensate for this situation and help alleviate any further issues with car parking in and around Brookmans Park and Pine Grove.

Location and Site

The site is located along the school access road, which joins Pine Grove at a T-junction. The school owns the road and therefore will not need to apply for permission from The Highways Agency to carry out the works. The location of this proposed additional parking has been carefully considered as the options have been very limited without considerably encroaching onto the existing main sports field. An added benefit of this proposed site is that access to the car park will be via the existing road.



Proposed Site plan

Proposals

The existing car park will expand both into the adjoining smaller playing field area and along the adjacent road over the pavement. There will be a new pedestrian path that will be re routed around the new parking spaces guiding pupils away from the adjacent bus turning circle. Although the car park will be encroaching on to the edge of the playing field it will not affect the current use and will remain well clear of any marked pitches.

The proposed car park bays are based on a 60 degree chevron design to maximise the quantity of new spaces and facilitate ease of access and egress from the adjacent road. The parking surface will be constructed using a permeable 'Grasscrete' type product, which has been selected as it only requires a shallow sub-base, whilst having good load bearing capacity, improving storm water absorption and providing a sustainable drainage solution. This product will also reduce the visual impact of the car parking surface by avoiding solid areas of tarmac. The new pedestrian path will ensure a safe route around the new parking bays and a new fence will replace the existing fence separating the sports field.

Planning Policy

In addressing the issue of 'Need' for the car park and also why this site in the Green Belt has been chosen we have considered the proposals in the context of the following key issues:

Relevant Planning Policies:

1. The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) applies to all developments.
2. Relevant Saved and Emerging Local Plan Policies are outlined below Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
 3. SD1 – Sustainable Development GBSP1 – Definition of the Green Belt
 4. GBSP2 – Towns and Specified Settlements
 5. R1 – Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land
 6. R11 – Biodiversity and Development
 7. R20 – Light Pollution
 8. M14 – Parking Standards for New Development
 9. D1 – Quality of Design
 10. D2 – Character and Context
 11. D8 – Landscaping OS2 – Playing Pitch Provision
 12. CLT8 – New and Extended Education Facilities
 13. RA10 – Landscape Regions and Character Areas
 - 14.

Other supplementary policies:

Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 (SDG)
Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards 2004 (SPG) Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes 2014 (Interim Parking Policy)

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016:

SP1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
SP3 – Settlement Strategy and Green Belt Boundaries
SP4 – Transport and Travel
SADM2 – Highway Network and Safety
SP6 – Community Services and Facilities
SADM7 – New Community Services and Facilities, and Losses of Community Services and Facilities
SP9 – Place-making and High Quality Design
SADM11 – Amenity and Layout
SADM12 – Parking, Servicing and Refuse
SADM16 – Ecology and Landscape
SADM18 – Environmental Pollution
SADM34 – Development in the Green Belt

In reviewing the relevant policy documents together with the Preplanning advice received to date on the new sports hall project, the main points to address when considering this type of development are as follows:

- **Green Belt:** Whether the proposal comprises appropriate development within the Green Belt and if not whether there are any very special circumstances to overcome the harm to the Green Belt.
- **Impact upon the character and appearance of the area**
- **Impact upon the amenities of nearby occupiers**

Addressing these issues in turn;

Green Belt - GBC1 Appropriate Development in the Green Belt

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF sets out forms of development that are appropriate within the Green Belt. The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan defines the greenbelt under Policy GBSP1 -Definition of the greenbelt.

Other than an area of new fence (the existing will be removed and a new fence introduced set further back from the road) there will be no elevated structures associated with the parking area. To this end the presence of the parking bays themselves and their impact on the Green Belt is considered minimal. The proposed spaces are designated bays and are set back off the road. This will help reduce the impact of the current situation as cars currently park wherever there is any available space on the road or straddling pavements.

The proposals will assist in rationalising parking within the school whilst the previously approved spaces are being constructed (alongside the new build sports facility on site at present) and during the unprecedented pandemic period the country faces and the implications this has on increased travel arrangements to and from the school. Staff, parents and students are not using public transport nor opting for car sharing opportunities during the pandemic. This situation has already seen an influx of additional vehicles into the school and existing car parking areas are insufficient even once the previously approved 33 spaces are built out. Whilst it is acknowledged that this is a temporary situation (and one which will be helped by the additional 33 places previously approved) no one can tell at this stage how long the pandemic will run on for but in any event it is likely to have an impact for many months to come. Similarly the school have little control over these additional vehicles during this period as the cars will come to the school irrespective of this application being approved or not.

Policy R1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 refers to:

- Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land

In order to make the best use of land in the district, the Council will require development to take place on land which has been previously used or developed. Development will only be permitted on 'greenfield' land where it can be demonstrated that no suitable opportunities exist on previously used or developed land.

We have carefully considered the location and have used a minimal area of playing fields that will not impact on the use or encroach into any of the marked pitches. The area proposed for the new parking spaces is not actually used for sports activities and as such there will be no loss of provision experienced by the school.

We believe that very special circumstances exist to support this application for additional (albeit temporary) provision of additional car parking due to the impact that Covid -19 is having on increased travel to and from the school at present.

Given the siting of the proposals we do not believe the proposals will constitute a harmful impact on the Green Belt.

Impact upon the character and appearance of the area.

With the careful positioning of the car park within the school grounds and the proposed surface treatment the visual impact is minimal for both the school and neighbouring properties. The chosen location is shielded by existing trees on the approach along the access road. Essentially the proposals are located predominantly out of sight of the local residents and neighbouring properties, and as such, has negligible impact on the character and appearance of the area. Whilst it is acknowledged that there will be cars parked in these spaces they will predominantly only be there during normal school hours.

Proposals include the planting of four small trees within the parking layout to further soften and positively contribute to the boundary condition in this area although it should be noted that no existing trees are to be removed as a result of this development.

Impact upon the amenities of nearby occupiers.

Given existing issues associated with school and neighbours, provision of additional car park spaces can only be of benefit to the nearby occupiers. The proposals will help reduce street based parking and alleviate restricted traffic flow caused by cars parked by school users.

Summary

Whilst the provision of additional car parking has been specifically proposed to address existing shortfalls together now with increased demand arising from increased numbers of pupil/teachers there is heightened pressure on parking arising from the current Covid-19 pandemic. Additional car journeys and therefore parking requirements are increased due to the current Covid measures and staff/parents/students not using public transport or car sharing opportunities. This is not a situation anyone could have envisaged however given current Government guidance this is only likely to get worse over forthcoming months.

The school has met with council/local MPs to discuss the issue on Pine Grove and a commitment made to look at solutions to address local resident concerns. Informal advice and support has been offered with regards these measures and the introduction of additional car parking spaces.

To alleviate the current parking shortage for the school users it is essential to introduce a new on-site temporary, parking area. The new car park has been carefully positioned, given the existing school grounds where available space is very restricted and avoids reduction of existing playing field area. The new pedestrian route around the parking will keep users safe and directed away from traffic whilst creating minimal visual impact on the local surroundings.

The proposed site is accessible via the existing access road to and from the school and the new parking spaces will facilitate increased parking within the school grounds whilst reducing that which currently takes place on the adjacent residential streets.