

PLANNING STATEMENT

FORMER SEA CADETS SITE AT WATERSPLASH LANE UB3 4QS



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I.0 INTRODUCTION

The Application Site is part of a large, Council owned tract of land in the Green Belt, which is bordered by North Hyde Road to the north, the back gardens of the terrace fronting Watersplash Lane to the west, Watersplash Lane and Cranford Park to the south and the River Crane and its floodplain to the east.

The Application Site comprises the remains of a large brick building, of some 210 square metres, originally used by a sea cadet group, though vacated at least ten years ago. Around the building, to east and south is a large area of concrete hard standing, once used for car parking. The northern part of the Application site is open, although part at least appears to have been made-up ground, and there is a belt of trees fronting North Hyde Road. The entrance to the site is in Watersplash Lane, a narrow, single track road leading from North Hyde Road around a blind bend to the Cranford Park entrance and this site. From this point it narrows to form a footpath towards River Crane and running close to the river.

By 2013 the building was being squatted by a biker group called the Road Rats and Legal Services subsequently commenced proceedings for the recovery of the site. Since 2017, the site has been used for storage, on a temporary basis, by a Council contractor. Storage units have been erected.



2.0 NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Current Issues with the Site and Neighbouring Area

This Application Site is in the Green Belt and has had a previous community use. However it has not been considered suitable for such a use in recent years due to the condition of the existing building and its surroundings, an unsuitable access road and the persistent anti-social behaviour which takes place on and around the site.

There have been multiple reports of anti social behaviour in this area, covering issues such as fly tipping and community and neighbourhood nuisance. There have also been a number of unauthorised encampments at the location, as well as reports of drug dealing. These have been ongoing for a number of years, with the fly tipping being of high volume in recent months. The situation has been exacerbated by the long awaited redevelopment of the derelict Crane P.H. and the relative isolation and seclusion of this part of Watersplash Lane. A proposal to improve the location would have a beneficial effect on the lives of local residents and assist the Council and the police in tackling crime and disorder there.

Moreover, Watersplash Lane marks the northern extent of Cranford Country Park. The use of the Application site in conjunction with the proposed restoration of the buildings and landscape at Cranford Park has been a consideration since the Round 1 Bid, submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in August 2017. At that time it was considered as a potential car park site. However, the lack of natural surveillance, the ongoing ASB problems and the poor vehicular access did not make this a practical proposition, despite the need for a car park at this important entrance to the park.

Now that the Crane PH has planning permission for redevelopment for residential, with highways improvements and a S106 contribution towards enhancing the entrance to the park, and the Round 2 Bid for the Cranford Park project will have been submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in February 2020, this is the optimum time to carry out a co-ordinated enhancement of this whole area, to render it attractive and a welcoming entrance to Cranford Park.

2.2 The Shortage of High Quality, Accessible Open Space in the Hayes Area

The population to the north and west of the Application Site is densely populated and growing through in-migration, supported by very considerable housing development taking place in the area, notably in the Hayes Housing Zone just to the north of North Hyde Road. By 2026, the population of this area is projected to increase by 21%.

It is to be noted that the Strategic Infrastructure Study, commissioned in 2017 as part of the Evidence Base for Local Plan 2, has identified a considerable shortage of high quality, accessible open space in the Hayes area.

<https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/33978/Infrastructure-planning>

The project at Cranford Park would make a very significant contribution to the provision of high quality and accessible open space in the area, with the restoration of historic buildings and landscape, a number of attractive visitor facilities and a full events programme. It is anticipated that, when the residential developments come forward in Hayes, this park entrance in Watersplash Lane will become an important gateway for visitors.

2.3 The Proposals

The proposals for the Application Site would involve the demolition of the existing single storey, brick clad, modular building and the removal of all the storage units within the site.



View of the site, looking east, in 2017, after the Council contractors had moved in

The Application includes the erection of two, semi-detached houses, with gardens and parking spaces, and the construction of a public car park, comprising 31 parking spaces, for the benefit of visitors to Cranford Park. Watersplash Lane itself would be widened and drainage introduced, while the entrance to Cranford Park would be improved and a new children's play area introduced inside the park.

3.0 How the Proposed Development accords with the National, Regional and Local Planning Policies

The Application Site is subject to a number of statutory designations under the Town and Country Planning Acts and other Statutory Acts of Parliament. Policy guidance

is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, London Plan 2016 and LB Hillingdon Local Plan 1: Strategic Policies (2012) and Local Plan 2: Development Management Policies (2020).

The whole of the site falls within the Green Belt and the eastern portion of the site, adjoining the River Crane but outside the Application Site boundary, is in the Flood Zone. The site is also within an Archaeological Priority Area.

3.1 Protecting Green Belt Land

3.1.1 Policy Guidance

The Application Site and Cranford Park have been included, in their entirety, in the Green Belt.

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of the Green Belt are openness and permanence.

The NPPF, paragraph 145 advises that a Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. The only exceptions potentially being:

- a. Agricultural or Forestry buildings
- b. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- c. The extension or alteration of an existing building if not disproportionate in size
- d. Replacement of a building in the same use but no larger than its predecessor
- e. Infilling within a village envelope
- f. Limited affordable housing
- g. Limited infilling of previously developed land, where substantial harm is not caused to the openness of the Green Belt.

These proposals do not align with any of the exceptions listed above and a case for Very Special Circumstances will therefore need to be made.

3.1.2 The Openness of the Green Belt

Although the Application Site is owned by LB Hillingdon, it has not been open to the public since the Sea Cadets left, many years ago. It is surrounded by a tall security fence and locked gates and the existing building and the site in general are in poor condition.



Gates to the Application Site 2019

Moreover, most of the Application site was either concreted over, or a made-up surface introduced, many years ago.



Photo of the concrete hardstanding to east and north of the existing building, 2017

The floor area of the existing building and that of the two proposed houses is the same, although the houses would be set further back into the site towards North Hyde Road on what is now, partly at least, a made-up surface. This reconfiguration allows a better use of the site. The proposed car park would stand on the concrete

surface and although there would be some limited encroachment to the east, the car park would include some tree planting within and around it.

3.1.3 The Justification for Housing

It is considered that if the old Sea Cadet Hut were demolished, the site tidied and the existing hardstanding once again laid out for the parking, the anti-social behaviour on this site and in the immediate area would not abate. The site is screened from North Hyde Road by tree cover and from the terrace of houses by their back gardens and fences. When walking down Watersplash Lane, the blind bend, the narrowness of the lane and the park opposite means that it is very secluded with no natural surveillance. All these factors enable the anti-social behaviour and it is likely that this situation would continue were the site merely to be laid out as car parking.

The building of the two houses would ensure an oversight and a natural surveillance over this area of car parking, which would be essential to enhance this site, render it of benefit to the local community and help keep it problem free. Although the widening of the access road is required for this development, it would be a major advantage to open up views through to the park entrance, both from the point of view of giving the entrance the importance and status that it requires and to deter the tipping which occurs frequently either just in front of the entrance gates or just over the fence in the park.



Fly tipping outside the park gate, October 2019



Dumping of rubbish inside the fence to the park - August 2019

3.1.4. Cranford Park

The proposals for Cranford Park, which would include an improved entrance with lighting and cameras and the addition of a children's playground, would enhance the enjoyment and legibility of Cranford Park and enhance this northern section considerably, attracting visitors to spend time there. These proposals thus accord with exception (b) above.

3.1.5 The Contribution of the Application Site to the Viability of the Project as a Whole

Cranford Park has one vehicular entrance from The Parkway, which is difficult to negotiate and single track. It leads to an existing car park of 39 spaces. As part of the project, a passing place would be created on the entrance drive and the car park would be extended so as to accommodate 49 spaces. However, given that the project would include cafe, toilets, meeting places, site offices, an office to let, interpretation, cycle tracks, trails and a full Activity programme of events and volunteering opportunities, there is predicted to be a considerable uplift in visitor numbers.

Of the six pedestrian entrances, by far the most used (there are visitor sensors on all the entrances) are the footpath from Roseville Road and the entrance in Watersplash Lane. Neither of these accommodates any car parking at present: Roseville Road is a residential street which is quite heavily parked up, and Watersplash Lane is too narrow in itself to permit parking and too close to the Bulls

Bridge roundabout and the congested North Hyde Road to offer any nearby car parking facilities.

Thus the car park afforded by this development (which would have parking charges and be supervised), the improvements to the road with its improved sightlines, the enhanced presence of the entrance way, the opportunities to include surface water drainage (which at present does not exist) and the creation of a children's playground would be of great benefit to the park and very crucial to its viability, especially in its objective of attracting visitors from the Hayes Housing Zone to the north and west.

Moreover, there is a proposal for a cycle track from the Canal, south down Watersplash Lane and through the northern section of the park, joining then with a circular track around the park. The safety of cyclists would be increased through the highway improvements to Watersplash Lane.

3.1.6 The Very Special Circumstances of the Application's Proposals

In summary, the very special circumstances of these proposals are that:

- The site can be opened up again, allowing it to be enhanced and brought back into community use
- The building of the two houses would provide natural surveillance, ending the site's seclusion, which in turn will help deter the site's long history of anti-social behaviour
- The public car park would be of great benefit to the visitors to Cranford Park, attracted by the new facilities and events programme forming part of the project. It would help the viability of the project as a whole, but particularly encourage the use of this northern part of the park.
- The widening of Watersplash Lane, necessary for the car park, would greatly benefit the park by opening up views of the park's entrance. This in turn would deter some of the fly tippers who dump material in front of the gate or just over the fence. There would be an additional benefit for the cycling proposals.
- The development would enable the construction of a children's playground at the northern end of the park, and this would be of community benefit to the families moving into the many new residential blocks in the area.

3.2 The Protection of Archaeological Heritage Assets

The application site falls within an Archaeological Priority Area, under the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2, adopted in January 2020. Policy DMHB7 states that:

The Council, as advised by the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, will ensure that sites of archaeological interest within designated areas are not disturbed. If that cannot be avoided, satisfactory measures must be taken to mitigate the impacts of the proposals through archaeological fieldwork to investigate or record remains in advance of development works.

The Application Site is largely covered by a concrete hardstanding and made-up ground. However any archaeological interest remaining in the site will be identified by the Principal Archaeological Advisor of the Greater Archaeological Advisory Service and his recommendations will be followed.

3.3 Planning for Climate Change

New development should be planned to avoid vulnerability to a range of impacts arising from climate change.

3.3.1 Renewable Energy, Enhancing Air Quality and Water Conservation

The car park will be laid out with 31 spaces, of which some will have electric charging points. However all will have electric ducting so as to enable an increase in electric charging points in the future.

The car park will also include areas of landscaping to provide permeable surfaces and additional tree planting is proposed alongside North Hyde Road and around the perimeter of the Application Site. This will more than compensate for the loss of the three roadside trees in Watersplash Lane, which need to be felled for the widening of the road.

The NPPF paragraph 151 requires new development to help increase the supply of renewable and low carbon energy.

The new houses will be designed and insulated to a high specification and water conservation will include low water usage toilet flush and taps. Timber will come from sustainable sources.

3.4 Flood and Water Management

The area subject of this planning application is not in a flood zone, critical drainage area nor surface water area, although these zones and areas do occur to the east alongside the River Crane.

It has been noted that there is no drainage provision along Watersplash Lane at present. To rectify this, a swale would be cut into the verge immediately north of the park and a drainage ditch along the southern boundary of the car park.

3.5 Accessibility

Para 127 (f) of the NPPF says that the aim should be to create places that are safe, inclusive, accessible and which promote health and well being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

At present it would be very difficult for a disabled person to visit this northern part of the park, due to the lack of parking and the difficulties of negotiating North Hyde Road. The public car park would open up possibilities which, with the new track to be installed through the northern part of the park, would allow much greater accessibility into the park and down to the new facilities.

The car park would include four disabled parking bays.

4.0 The Planning Balance

It is considered that, the argument for very special circumstances, as required in paragraph 144 of the NPPF, for the building of a pair of semi-detached houses and a public car park, in a part of the Green Belt, is very strong.

It is considered that the proposals would greatly improve this site, which has been subject to anti-social behaviour for a long time. The proposals would enhance the appearance and bring back community benefit to the site, sustained through natural surveillance. The improvements to the entrance to Cranford Park, the access road and park facilities would be of great community benefit and would make this important section of the park, which is not greatly used at present, a real asset for the community, particularly for families moving into the new residential developments in the area.

On the basis of all these benefits, it is considered that the planning balance is greatly in favour of carrying out these proposals.

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