



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2017

by Stephen Roscoe BEng MSc CEng MICE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 11 December 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/17/3181149

Bullers Wood School Playing Fields, Bickley Road, Bickley, Bromley

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Kier Construction (Southern) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/16/03315/FULL1, dated 8 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a part two storey and part three storey teaching block with a sports hall together with hard and soft landscaping, the creation of a new access along Chislehurst Road, parking and associated ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Council's refusal notice refers to the appeal site as St Hughes Playing Fields and provides a more detailed description of the development rather than that in the application, as set out above. I am however satisfied that both the appeal site and the development are the same.
3. Following the Council's refusal, the appellant has submitted a further planning application for an amended proposal on the appeal site which includes increased pupil drop-off provision within the site. This further application is the subject of a Council resolution to grant planning permission. I have taken the information provided into account in my decision.

Reasons

4. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on highway safety in the surrounding area. The appeal site currently accommodates leisure uses including playing fields and a Royal Air Force Cadet Base. It is generally bounded by Bickley Road, Chislehurst Road and Pines Road which form a triangle around the site.
5. Bickley Road forms part of the A222 which is a main east-west route across south London and part of the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN). It is also a bus route. Chislehurst Road is a busy local road which feeds into the TLRN at its junction with Bickley Road. It has no footway where it adjoins the appeal site. Pines Road is more residential in character and use and is one-way from its junction with Bickley Road to its junction with Chislehurst Road.
6. The junction between Bickley Road and Chislehurst Road comprises a mini-roundabout which is situated in a physically constrained location and has

single lane traffic entry on each of its three arms. A survey, undertaken by the appellant, has shown there to be significant queueing on the Bickley Road and Chislehurst Road approaches to this roundabout in the morning and evening peak periods. Indeed, I viewed the roundabout a number of times during the day of my site visit and, when I viewed it at 15.00 hours, the queue on the Bickley Road approach extended back further than the access to the appeal site. This is much greater in length than the queue recorded in the appellant's queue survey for the same time on a weekday. My observed queueing on the A222 continued beyond the roundabout to the west as far as the Plaistow Lane signal controlled junction, which is some distance from the roundabout. This indicates to me that the A222 is a busy part of the TLRN and not just heavily trafficked at the appeal site. It also leads me to the view that peak time queuing on Bickley Road is likely to include the area of the access to the appeal site between the proposed school peak traffic hours of 07.30 to 08.30 and 15.00 to 16.00.

7. The Bickley Road and Pines Road junction is a part of a larger signalled junction with multi-lane entry and lesser queueing than occurs at the Bickley Road roundabout. The junction between Pines Road and Chislehurst Road is a priority junction in favour of Chislehurst Road, and this appears to be less heavily used than the other two junctions.
8. The proposal would incorporate a one way pupil drop-off and pick-up traffic route within the appeal site between a new access on Chislehurst Road and the existing site access on Bickley Road. The single file route could accommodate 50 vehicles along its length and would have a specific drop-off and pick-up area which could accommodate a further 10 vehicles. The appellant's traffic forecasts suggest that 118 vehicles would need to exit this route onto Bickley Road during each of the school peak hours. The appellant's network diagram for development traffic shows that some 80% of these exit movements would be to the west along Bickley Road. For a steady flow of traffic from the appeal site, this would generally equate to a vehicle requiring exiting every 40 seconds.
9. 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.
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.
11. On Bickley Road, frequent vehicle stops for such purposes would be incompatible with the strategic nature of the road and its peak queuing.

¹ London Borough of Bromley: Unitary Development Plan: July 2006

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.

12. The appellant has suggested that delays to vehicles passing through the site would be generally 1 minute. As a result of the potential need to join a queue of traffic on Bickley Road however, I am not satisfied that this would be the case. It has also been suggested that the proposal would not have a residual and severe impact on the transport network that would conflict with paragraph 32 of the Framework. I accept that the quantum of additional traffic that would result from the proposal would not have a severe impact in this regard. It is however the mechanisms by which this traffic, and its users, would interact with other traffic on the network which is my concern and which, in my view, would be likely to prevent the achievement of safe and suitable access to the appeal site in conflict with paragraph 32 of the Framework. In terms of the limited vehicle stop times to drop-off or pick-up, this interaction would be difficult to regulate.
13. I acknowledge that the proposal would have a different car use modal split than the recently permitted Eden Park school development but, even with this different split, I have still found the proposal to be unacceptable in terms of highway safety. I recognise that queue length modelling techniques can be unstable and may over predict queue lengths where roundabouts are reaching their capacity and that the techniques can be less accurate when used on mini-roundabouts. Here however, I have seen queue lengths that are greater than those predicted and these points do not therefore add weight in favour of allowing the appeal.
14. I therefore conclude 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.
15. The existence of clear educational planning policy context support for the proposed facility and an urgent and demonstrable need for the scheme are relevant matters in the consideration of this appeal. They would not however outweigh the harm that I have identified which does not relate to the facility or its location as such, but to the chosen access arrangements for the site.
16. Having taken into account all other matters raised, none carry sufficient weight to alter the decision, and my conclusion is based on the evidence before me in terms of policy as a whole. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Stephen Roscoe

INSPECTOR