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**F/YR18/0381/F**

**Applicant: Mr A Dighton  
Wisbech Grammar School**

**Agent :**

**Wisbech Grammar School, 46 - 48 North Brink, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire**

**Construction of a staff car park with access via Harecroft Road and link footpath to existing school and raising of existing AstroTurf fence to 6.0 metres (max) on eastern side**

**Reason for Committee: Number of objections contrary to Officer's recommendation.**

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## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a staff car park comprising of 98 spaces, a link footpath to the existing school (Wisbech Grammar School) and the raising of the existing Astroturf fence (on the east side) from 4 metres to 6 metres high. The site will utilise the existing access via Harecroft Road.

The supporting Design and Access Statement expresses that the existing school car park area, off Chapel Road, is over its capacity and causes congestion along Chapel Road and Harecroft Road as well as a safety hazard on the school premises. The proposed car park has therefore come forward to alleviate the car parking and congestion issue experienced.

The site is located within the settlement of Wisbech, to the west of Harecroft Road and comprises of grassland associated with Wisbech Grammar School.

The proposed car park is surrounded by a mixture of development and a significant amount of grassland. It is therefore considered that the proposed development will not result in adverse harm to the character of the local area nor result in a significant loss of green space.

County Highways considers the access road to be of a satisfactory width to allow for 2-way vehicular movement and the proposed development to not cause adverse harm to highway users.

The proposed development is within proximity to residential dwellings (Edina Court). It is considered that the proposed development will not cause any more harm in terms of noise and air pollution than what is currently experienced and given the hours of use and scale of development. It is also considered that due to the positioning, height and operating mechanism, the proposed low level lighting would not cause adverse harm. Furthermore, Environmental Health considers the proposed development will not cause residential amenity harm in respect to noise, air pollution and light pollution.

The North Level I.D.B, Wildlife Officer and Tree Officer has not objected to the proposal and therefore considers that the proposed development will not cause adverse harm in respect to flood risk and natural environment.

The proposal also provides safety measures in respect to low level lighting as well as the existing flood lights and security staff.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable and accords with National and Local Policies, as it represents no adverse harm in terms of principle of development, character and appearance, highways, residential amenity, flood risk, natural environment and community safety.

It is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted for this application.

## 2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is situated within the settlement of Wisbech to the west of Harecroft Road. The site comprises of grassland and an access road which is associated with Wisbech Grammar School (located to the south of the application site). The site is surrounded by residential and commercial properties, with the Hudson Centre (south-west of the site) and Edina Court (east of the site) being located close to the site.
- 2.2 The site is accessed off Harecroft Road and is located within Flood Zone 3 (high risk).

## 3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a staff car park comprising of 98 spaces, a link footpath to the existing school (Wisbech Grammar School) and the raising of the existing Astroturf fence (on the east side) from 4 metres to 6 metres high. The site will utilise the existing access via Harecroft Road.
- 3.2 Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

## 4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

Pertinent planning application identified in the table below:

Planning Reference	Description	Decision	Date
F/YR12/0937/F	Formation of 4 hard tennis courts and 1 mini tennis court, and associated car park, 3.2 metre high chain link fencing and 10 poles for floodlighting, and erection of a club house, involving the demolition of existing clubhouse and outbuildings.	Grant	23.01.13

## 5 CONSULTATIONS

### **Wisbech Town Council**

Support the application.

### **Cambridgeshire County Highways**

*The application is for the construction of a new car park via an access onto Harecroft Road, a link path to the existing school and raising an astro fence to 6m. The access to the proposed carpark is via an existing access onto Harecroft Road. The access is a suitable width to accommodate two way vehicle flow. I have no highways objections subject to the following conditions:*

*1) Prior to the first occupation of the development the proposed onsite parking and turning area shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan and thereafter retained for that specific use.*

*Reason: To ensure the permanent availability of the parking / manoeuvring area, in the interests of highway*

### **Environmental Health Service**

*Environmental Health has considered the proposed scheme and details of submissions made in support of the application. We can confirm we have no objection to the proposed application.*

### **Wildlife Officer (PCC)**

*I have had a look, no concerns, there is no lighting proposed near the existing mature trees which is good, and I would recommend a condition requiring 4 bird nest boxes to be installed on the trees, as per the ecology report. Subject to that condition, I would have no objection.*

### **Tree Officer (FDC)**

*Whilst I have no objection in principal, more information is required concerning the impact of the proposed parking spaces on the line of established trees along the access.*

*From the proposed layout, some of the parking spaces may be within the root protection areas (RPAs) of the trees requiring a specialised construction e.g. minimal dig using a cellular confinement system.*

*Therefore we require information on proximity to the RPAs and impact on the trees and methodology to ensure their long-term health.*

Following further information, the Tree Officer commented:

*As the trench angles away from the tree line the volume of roots is likely to diminish as you move north so I suggest that it is not worth you proceeding further.*

*The photographs show a large number of fibrous and small woody roots suggesting that the excavation is toward the periphery of the root system, although it is difficult to predict how much further the woody roots spread before becoming fibrous feeding roots.*

*Under normal conditions I would not consider that severing the roots you have exposed would lead to long-term decline of the trees, despite beech being sensitive to root disturbance (particularly soil compaction), as they are likely to regenerate from the cut ends rapidly. However, the current drought may lead to some crown dieback due to the loss of a percentage of the root system further reducing available moisture.*

*I consider the safest course of action would be to use a no-dig installation utilising a porous wearing surface with the cellular confinement system for the 10 bays closest to the tree line.*

*Your suggested solution looks workable and I have no objection to the proposal.*

*I believe there were initial concerns that porous tarmac would become less porous over time due to the accumulation of fines in the pore spaces, but this seems to have not been the case and it retains its porosity.*

### **Leisure Service (FDC)**

No comments received.

### **North Level I.D.B**

No comments received.

### **Local Residents/Interested Parties**

Six letters of objection have been received from local residents expressing the following concerns (summarised):

- Increase of traffic movement would cause congestion and would be dangerous for highway users.
- Noise and air pollution from increased number of cars would impact on residential amenity.
- The road currently experiences flooding from surface water and the proposed car park would exacerbate this.
- The car park being open to the public would attract anti-social behaviour.

## **6 STATUTORY DUTY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014).

## 7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

### **National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (NPPF)**

Para 47 – Decisions should accord with the development plan

Para 124 – Good design

### **Fenland Local Plan 2014 (FLP)**

LP1 – Presumption In Favour of Sustainable Development

LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents

LP14 – Flood Risk

LP15 – Sustainable Transport

LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments

LP17 – Community Safety

LP19 – The Natural Environment

## 8 KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Character and Appearance**
- **Highways**
- **Residential Amenity**
- **Flood Risk**
- **Natural Environment**
- **Community Safety**

## 9 ASSESSMENT

### **Principle of Development**

- 9.1 Policy LP15 supports the principle of creating an access on the provision that they are well designed and safe. Policy LP14 also supports the principle of relocating the drainage system on the provision that the proposal does not result in cause risk of flooding in the area or elsewhere within the vicinity. Furthermore, Policy LP2 and LP16 seeks proposal to not cause adverse harm to the local character or to the general environment. Therefore, the principle of development may be considered acceptable subject to the below policy considerations.

### **Character and Appearance**

- 9.2 The proposed car park will be surrounded by development, with the Wisbech Tennis Club to the north, residential dwellings (Edina Court) to the east, Hudson Centre to the south and the Astro turf courts to the west. The access road associated with the application site is currently used to park cars as well as the Hudson Centre, which has a medium sized car parking area. It is therefore considered that the proposed development will have no more of an impact on the local character than the existing surrounding development and the existing car parking area of Hudson Centre.
- 9.3 Whilst, the proposed development will result in the loss of grassed area, this would amount to a small area in comparison with the grassed area available within the grounds of Wisbech Grammar School. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in a significant loss of green space.

- 9.4 The raising of the Astroturf fence by 2 metres is not considered to result in a prominent development within the context of its setting or appear incongruent given the existing Astroturf fence.
- 9.5 As such, the proposed development complies with Policy LP16 (d).

### **Highways**

- 9.6 The supporting Design and Access Statement expresses that the existing school car park area, off Chapel Road, over reaches its capacity at peak times causing congestion along Chapel Road and Harecroft Road as well as a safety hazard on the school premises. Also school staff park on the access road (serving Hudson Centre) which leads to further congestion. The proposed car park has therefore come forward to alleviate the car parking and congestion issue experienced at the Chapel Road car park. The new car park will be utilised by staff and visitors resulting in free up car parking spaces at the existing parking area (Chapel Road) which will be used for students and as a drop off / pick up area.
- 9.7 The proposed car park will utilise the existing access road off Harecroft Road. 98 car parking spaces will be provided and the car parking side fence will be raised to 6 meters high to protect the cars from hockey balls.
- 9.8 County Highways considers the access road to be of a satisfactory width and the proposed development to not cause adverse harm to highway users. Therefore, County Highways does not object to the proposed development subject to the car park being developed in accordance with the submitted plans. This can be conditioned in the event that planning permission is granted.
- 9.9 As such, the proposed development complies with Policy LP15.

### **Residential Amenity**

- 9.10 The proposed car park will be circa 22.5 metres from the boundary of Edina Court. The existing access also abuts the boundary of Edina Court. Edina Court is surrounded by Harecroft Road, The Tennis Club, Wisbech Grammar School's playing field and Hudson Centre's car park area. Therefore, from these activities residents of Edina Court would already experience a level of noise and disturbance throughout the day.
- 9.11 The Design and Access Statement specifies that the proposed car park would be in use from 7am to 7pm Mondays to Fridays and the car park overnight will be locked and patrolled by security staff. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not generate a level of noise nuisance above what would reasonably be expected from the daily activities within the area and especially during the working hours of 7am to 7pm, when the car park will be mostly used.
- 9.12 Concerns of air pollution have been expressed by residents of Edina Court, however, residents would already experience a level of air pollution from the existing vehicle numbers in the area and given the scale of the development it is not considered to significantly amount to serve air pollution. The Environment Health Team considers the proposed development will not result in significant noise or air pollution and therefore has no objection to the proposal.

- 9.13 Low level bollard lighting will be fitted to the edge of the proposed footpath for safety reasons. The lights will also be on a time switch as well as a passive infrared sensor (PIR) system to ensure the lights operate when required and turn off when not in use. The Environmental Health Team considers the proposed development will not cause adverse harm from light pollution and therefore have no objection to the proposal.
- 9.14 As such, the proposed development complies with Policies LP2 and LP16 (e).

### **Flood Risk**

- 9.15 The Design and Access Statement states that the proposed car park will be constructed from porous material and therefore allowing for surface water to be absorbed within the subsoil and reducing the impact on the drainage system. Also, an Aco drainage system will be connected to a new soakaway which will also aid in drainage of surface water. There is also existing drainage in the area. North Level I.D.B was consulted as part of this application, however, no comments were received and therefore it is considered that North Level I.D.B does not object to the proposed development. As such, it is considered that the proposed development will not exacerbate the existing risk of flooding in the immediate or nearby area. Therefore, the proposed development complies with Policy LP14.

### **Natural Environment**

- 9.17 The Wildlife Officer considers the proposed development will not result in an adverse harm to biodiversity subject to the development being carried out in accordance with the submitted ecology report, which recommends the installation of 4 bird boxes on the mature trees abutting the site boundary. This can be conditioned should planning permission be granted.
- 9.18 The Tree Officer in his initial comments had no objection to the proposal in principle but required further information in respect to the root protection area (RPA) of the trees adjacent to the access road and the site boundary.
- 9.19 Following further information and revision to the method of construction of the car park and access. The Tree Officer considers the proposed development will not cause significant harm to the mature trees subject to the development being carried out in accordance with the submitted plans and documents. As such, the Tree Officer has no objection to the proposed development.
- 9.20 Subsequently, the proposed development complies with Policy LP16 (c) and LP19.

### **Community Safety**

- 9.21 The proposed development will incorporate low level lighting along the proposed footpath and the area to be used as the proposed car park has existing floodlights which will remain as part of the proposed development and therefore the proposed car parking area will have sufficient means of security lighting. The Design and Access Statement mentions that the existing school gates will remain as well as the existing bollards which would prevent illegal access onto the site and the car park will be locked at night times, and patrolled by security staff.

- 9.22 As such, it is considered that the proposed development will adopt a number of safety measures to deter ant-social behaviour and to ensure the car park is a safe area. The proposed development therefore complies with Policy LP2 and LP17.

## **10 CONCLUSIONS**

- 10.1 The proposal is considered acceptable and accords with National and Local Policies, as it represents no adverse harm in terms of principle of development, character and appearance, highway, residential amenity, flood risk, natural environment and community safety.
- 10.2 It is therefore recommend that planning permission is granted for this application.

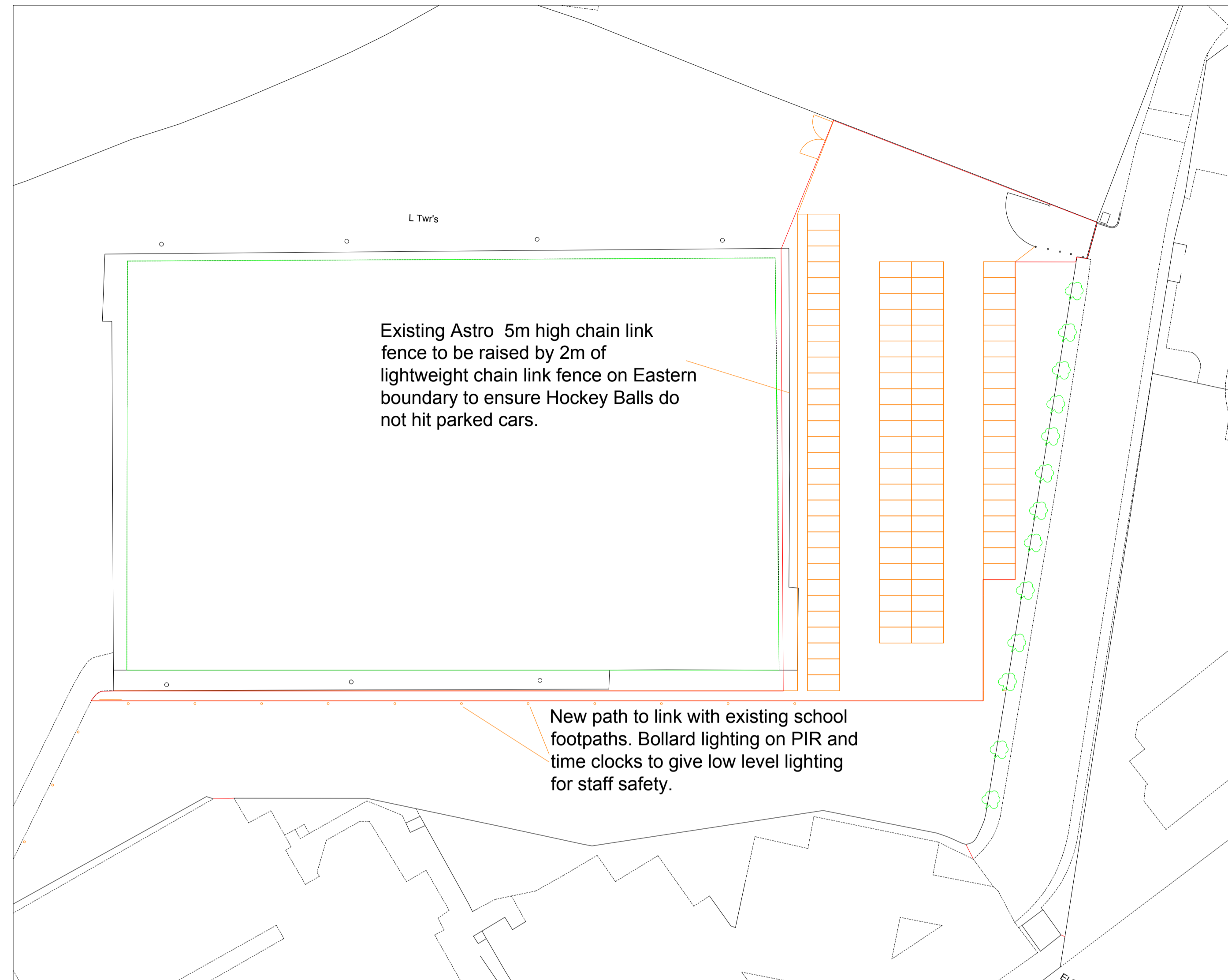
## **11 RECOMMENDATION**

### **Grant subject to the following conditions:**

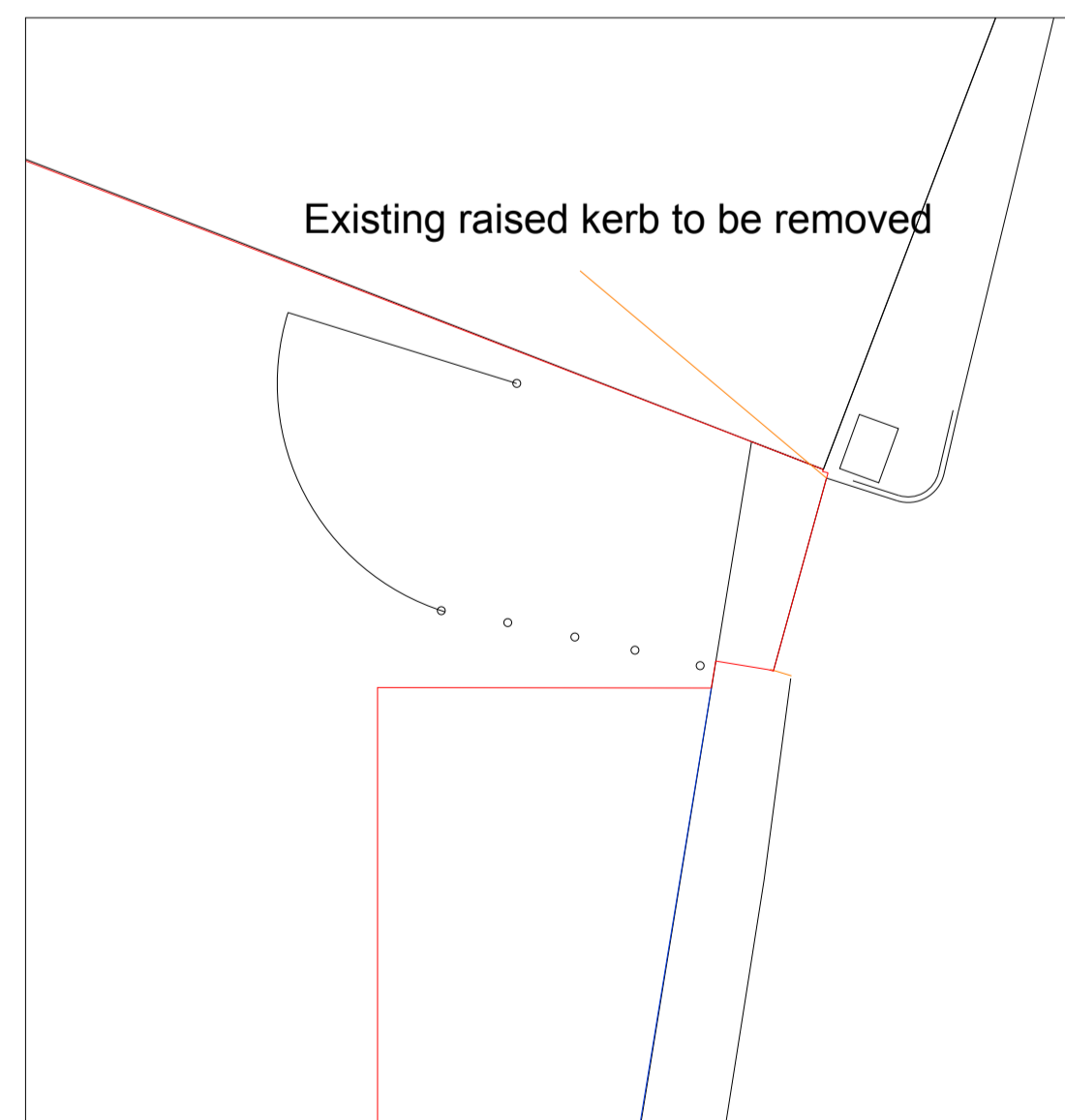
1. The development permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.
2. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, the parking and turning area shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan and thereafter retained for that specific use.
3. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, 4 bird nest boxes shall be installed in accordance with the approved Ecology Report (prepared by Prime Environment, dated April 2018).
4. The car park hereby approved shall be constructed in accordance with the approved Car Park Construction Plan (ref: 009).
5. The car park entrance gate (denoted on Site Plan ref: 1000- 005) shall not be open outside the hours of 7am to 7pm on any day and the car park shall only be used within these hours.
6. Prior to the commencement of any works or storage of materials on the site all trees that are to be retained shall be protected in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012. Moreover measures for protection in accordance with that standard shall be implemented and shall be maintained to the Local Planning Authority's reasonable satisfaction until the completion of the development for Building Regulations purposes.
7. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents.



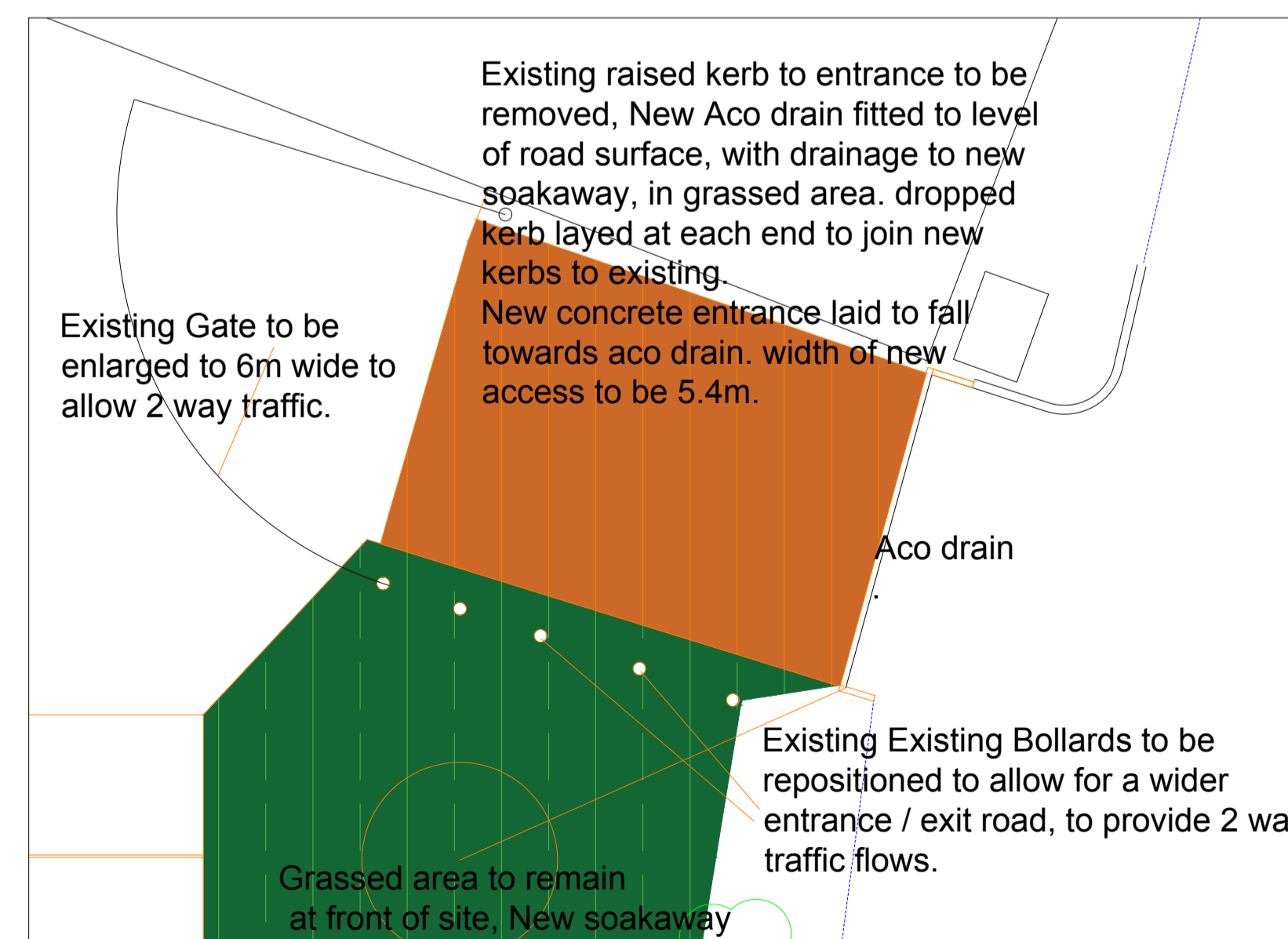




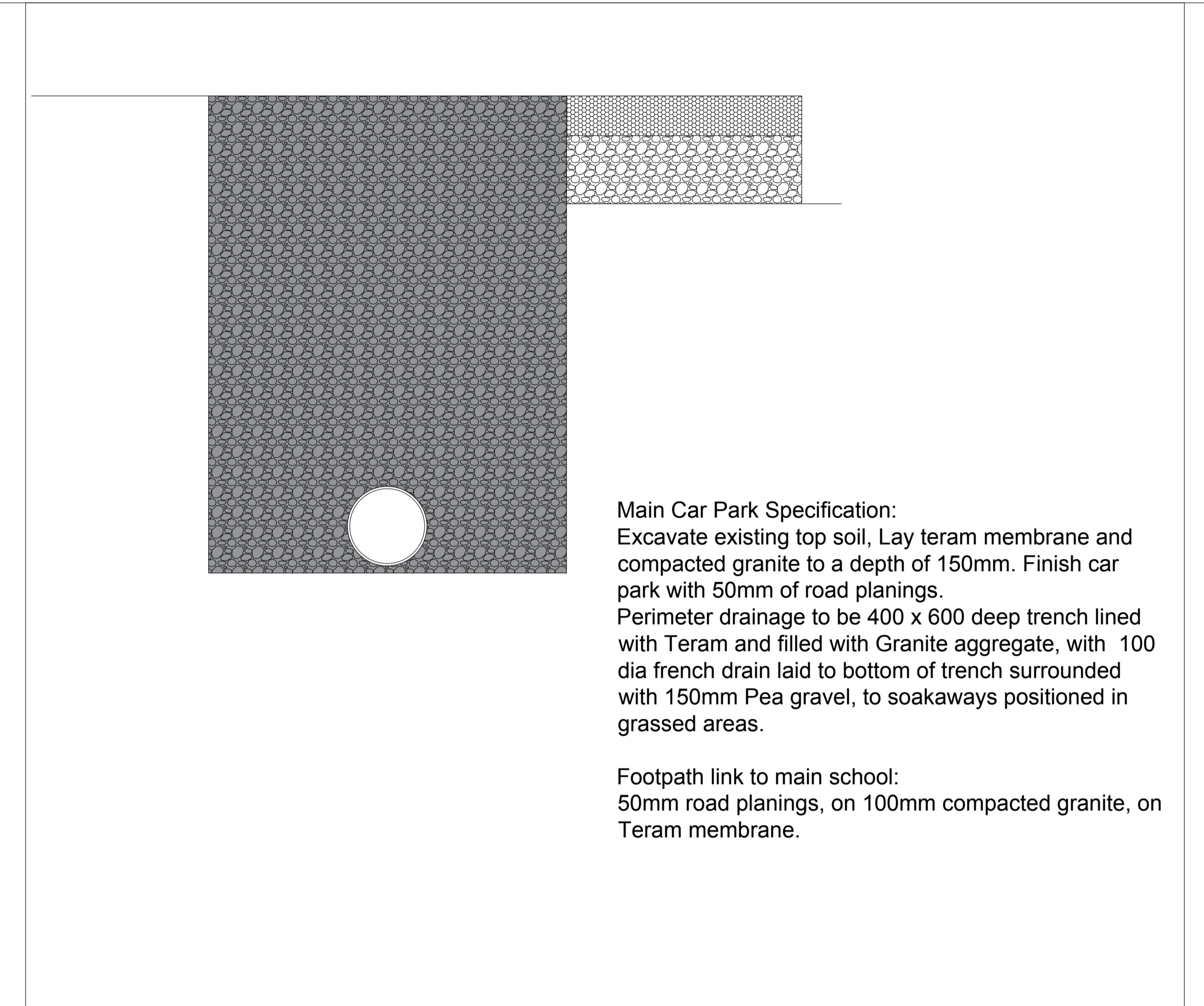
Proposed Car Park Plan 1:500



Entrance as Existing 1:200



Entrance as proposed 1:100



Typical Construction Detail 1:5

Notes:

New Car Parking bays to 2.4m x 4.8m with 6m road way between rows of parking bays.  
Perimeter of Car park area to have gravel trench 400mm wide x 600mm deep with French drain laid to the bottom to soakaways in grassed area

Wisbech Grammar School  
Facilities Department  
47 North Brink  
Wisbech  
PE13 1JX  
Tel: 01945-583631

Project:  
Proposed Staff Car Park  
Leading on to Harecroft Road..

Drawing Title:  
Proposals for car parking.

Drawn by: Andrew Dighton

Date: 7 Feb 2018

Scale: As indicated @ A1

Drg No: 1000- 005 Rev: