

**Planning Committee**

**20 February 2008**

**Development by the  
County Council**



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**Report of Rod Lugg, Head of Environment and Planning**

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**Purpose of the report: To enable the Committee to determine applications for planning permission which have been received in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.**

## **Introduction**

- 1 In response to on going security problems, Stanley School of Technology recently erected a new section of fencing along its northern boundary. This was drawn to the attention of the Planning Authority following a complaint and the school was informed that the works needed planning consent. This application seeks to retain the fence.

## **The Development**

- 2 The fencing is 2.7 metres high and runs 143 metres along the school boundary adjacent to a footpath to the front of properties on Eastfields (see attached plan). It links into existing fencing of a similar height and design along the remainder of the site boundary for which planning permission was granted in 2004. The fence is of steel construction, painted green and designed with contoured vertical bars. The top has been fitted with spiked plastic anti scaling rowels. The fence has replaced a high galvanized steel palisade fence of approximately 1.6 metres. This did not require planning permission as it was below 2 metres in height.

## **Consultations and Representations**

- 3 Derwentside District Council has no objections to the proposal.
- 4 The application has been advertised on site and adjacent properties along Eastfields were notified. Two letters of objection have been received from local residents, one of which contains a petition against the development. The petition has six signatories, all of whom reside between 88 and 94 Eastfields. The letters highlight the following concerns:
  - i) The fence blocks out light to adjacent properties.
  - ii) The hedge next to the fence will grow unchecked and block out light and the view.
  - iii) Adjacent houses have been de-valued.
  - iv) The fence resembles the boundary of a prison.
  - v) The angled vertical bars of the fence make focusing on the view through it difficult.
  - vi) The fence is not needed. No one climbed the old fence which was more aesthetically pleasing and secure.
  - vii) School security would be better achieved through a more cost effective alarm system to the buildings as access will always be found to the grounds.

## Planning Comment

- 5 The development raises detailed issues relating to its impact upon the amenities of adjoining residents. Policy GDP1 of the Derwentside District Local Plan relating to general development principles is of relevance.
- 6 Stanley School of Technology is located on a large and relatively open hillside site in South Stanley. The main school buildings lie to the east of the site with sports pitches and playing fields to the west and south. Site levels slope downwards from north to south. The site is bordered to the north by properties on Eastfields and Lindon Road and there is housing to the south and east.

## Residential Amenity

- 7 The new section of fencing matches and completes the coverage of 2.7 metres high fencing around various parts of the site. Some of this is on the site boundary and some of it forms an inner security cordon around the buildings and playing fields. The principle of using this type of fencing has therefore been established by the earlier consent and in the wider visual context it can be appropriately located into the surroundings without adversely affecting the appearance of the area.
- 8 However, the new section directly faces 17 terraced properties with short, mainly 'open plan' front gardens at distances of 6-7 metres. There is doubt over the security benefits of providing the fence in this location as the boundary is closely overlooked and sits at the top of a steep embankment. The footpath is also lit by streetlights and this would not appear to be a particularly vulnerable part of the site. The fence has created an increased sense of enclosure and reduced outlook for some occupiers that enjoy views across the school grounds to rising open land in the distance. These have been disrupted by the taller fencing.
- 9 Whilst acknowledging the concerns of residents, loss of outlook is not a planning consideration and fencing to a height of 2.0 metres can be installed without the need for planning permission in most instances. There are also no planning restrictions on the height of boundary planting which in this case includes a mix of hedgerow and trees to variable heights on the school side of the fence.
- 10 Despite its robust construction and overbearing feel on the back edge of the footpath, the fence is coloured a suitable shade of green and ties in with adjacent planting. The vertical bars allow sufficient light penetration such that there is no direct impact on daylight and sunlight levels to the closest windows on neighbouring properties.

- 11 The screening effect of the fence is likely to change as the hedges grow and become thicker. In order to help address this issue and maintain a relatively open aspect these hedges could be removed from the boundary opposite 88-94 Eastfields subject to the agreement of concerned residents.

### **Recommendation and Reasons**

- 12 The fence has been installed with the intention of increasing security at the site. Whilst there is some doubt about the benefits of providing this type of fencing on this part of the site it does compliment that used elsewhere. Although the fence affects the outlook of some surrounding occupiers it would have limited overall affect in planning terms on the appearance and residential amenity of the area. I therefore **recommend** that:

- i) Planning permission be granted for the following reason, subject to relevant conditions regarding hedge removal, if and where appropriate.

The fencing by reason of its location, design and colour reflects existing boundary treatment on the site and would not significantly detract from the appearance of the locality or the amenities of surrounding residents. The proposal would accord with Policy GDP1 of the Derwentside District Local Plan.

- ii) In view of the circumstances that have led to the submission of this planning application:

The school be advised of the Planning Committee's disappointment and concern that the fence was installed without the benefit of planning permission and reminded of the need to notify the planning authority at the earliest opportunity about intended developments on the site.

### **No Departure**

**Background Papers:** Application, consultations and responses, site location plans.

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