

**Application Ref:** 23/00600/R3FUL

**Proposal:** Provision of 1.85m weldmesh fencing and 2 x gates to western boundary of school playing fields, and modification of existing gates and replacement fencing to southwest boundary

**Site:** Castor Church Of England Primary School, Stocks Hill, Castor, Peterborough

**Applicant:** Peterborough City Council

**Agent:** Mr Gareth Olford-Bell  
Aragon

**Referred by:** **Glington Parish Council**

**Reason:** The fencing will harm the character of the Conservation Area and will harm the setting of the Church which is a Grade 1 Listed Building

**Site visit:** 08.08.2023

**Case officer:** Karen Ip  
**E-Mail:** karen.ip@peterborough.gov.uk

**Recommendation:** **GRANT** subject to relevant conditions

## **1 Description of the site and surroundings and Summary of the proposal**

### **Site and surroundings**

The application site is the school field of the Castor Church of England Primary School. The school is located within the conservation area and is also a scheduled monument site.

The school field is located to the west of the school and sited along Peterborough Road. To the north of the school field Grade I listed St Kyneburgha's Church and to the east is grade II listed 26 Peterborough Road.

### **Proposal**

The applicant is seeking planning permission for the provision of 1.85m weldmesh fencing and 2 x gates to the northwestern western boundary of school playing fields, and modification of existing gates and replacement fencing to the southwest boundary.

The proposal would include removal of the existing fencing along the southwest boundary and its replacement with slightly taller weldmesh fencing. A new section of weldmesh fencing and 2 x pedestrian gates would be added along the northwest boundary. All new fences would be set behind the existing 1.5m high stone boundary walls which would not be removed or altered.

During the application process the fence specification has been amended to a thinner mesh type to reduce the visual impact - 'Bettafence Nylofor 3D Lightpowder coated weldmesh panel in black', with vertical barbs of 30mm on one end which can be positioned either at the top or the bottom. The meshes are 200 x 50mm, and 100x 50mm on curved sections. The wire diameter is 4mm.

The existing main set of gates would remain in situ, but with an additional infill panel of 150mm welded to the bottom on a hinge. This would allow the gate to continue to open inwards as existing with the panel folded up, and to fill the gap between the ground and bottom of gate when closed.

## 2 **Planning History**

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Date</b>
99/00749/R3FUL	Siting of two mobile units for educational purposes (retrospective)	Permitted	20/09/1999
00/00064/R3FUL	Extension to provide new hall, kitchen stores, plant room and corridor, extension of existing classroom, relocation of part of playground and creation of pathway to school building from Peterborough Road	Permitted	25/04/2002
01/01273/R3FUL	Single storey extension to library	Permitted	06/12/2001
02/01055/R3FUL	Renewal of planning permission 99/00749/R3FUL for siting of two mobile units for educational purposes	Permitted	17/09/2002
07/00191/R3FUL	Retention of freestanding seating area with shade	Permitted	06/09/2007
08/00099/R3FUL	Single storey front extension and access ramp	Permitted	02/04/2008
08/00377/R3FUL	Erection of play equipment to include 1 x 3 panel traversing wall and 1 x small fantasy village	Permitted	13/05/2008
09/00538/FUL	Provision of single storey pitched roof log cabin and store	Permitted	09/07/2009
15/00067/FUL	Proposed timber canopy with polycarbonate sheet roof	Permitted	06/03/2015
15/02028/FUL	5 bay mobile classroom	Withdrawn by Applicant	09/12/2015
16/00195/R3FUL	5 bay mobile providing 2 classrooms, storage and toilet facilities	Permitted	11/04/2016
17/00268/CTR	T1 Ash - multi stem Ash on boundary of 'The Royal Oak' pub and school - building clearance of 2m and canopy raise to 4m		
	T2 Ash - multi stem Ash on boundary of 'The Royal Oak' pub and school - building clearance of 2m and canopy raise to 4m		
	T3 Field Maple - located in school play field next to the path - 30% selective thinning	Permitted	22/03/2017
19/00845/R3FUL	Renewal of planning permission 16/00195/R3FUL for single storey mobile classroom	Permitted	

## 3 **Planning Policy**

Decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan policies below unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (2023)**

Paragraph 99 - School Provision

Paragraph 208 - less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset

### **Peterborough Local Plan 2016 to 2036 (2019)**

LP2 – Settlement Hierarchy

LP13 - Transport

LP16 - Urban Design and the Public Realm

LP17 - Amenity Provision

LP19 - The Historic Environment

LP30 – Community Facilities

## **Castor Neighbourhood Plan (2017-2036) (December 2017)**

CH 1 - Criteria for all building development within the parish

CLU4 – Historic Environment

CSE3 - Education

### **4 Consultations/Representations**

#### **Archaeological Officer (26.03.24)**

No objection, subject to condition for submission of WSI and Scheduled Monument Consent.

#### **PCC Peterborough Highways Services (30.05.24)**

No objection - Having reviewed the plans and information submitted it is the view of the LHA that the proposals are considered unlikely to have a material impact upon the public highway.

#### **PCC Tree Officer (09.05.24)**

No Objection -Accepts the submitted amended AMS & TPP and advises conditions to ensure trees protected during installation

#### **PCC Conservation Officer (04.06.24)**

Objection – Considers the proposal would result in less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale) to the setting of heritage assets but that the magnitude of harm is a spectrum and for it to be acceptable, any public benefit to outweigh this harm must be substantive and it must be demonstrated that this is the only viable and reasonable solution.

#### **Castor Parish Council (21.07.23)**

Objection - the fencing will harm the character of the Conservation Area and will harm the setting of the Church which is a Grade 1 Listed Building. This is contrary to NPPF paragraph 201 or 202 depending upon the weight given to the harm, and Local Plan policy LP19.

It is appreciated that there is fencing along the Peterborough Road frontage already which may be improved by the proposal. A revised proposal which contained this element may be acceptable.

The proposed fencing alongside the gravel drive to the church is only proposed to be 350 mm higher than the wall. We do not consider that this will make any difference to the security of the site. We consider that the returns around the pedestrian gates are particularly poorly designed adding extra fencing when some additional height to the gates would be less intrusive.

#### **Ailsworth Parish Council (02.08.23)**

Objection - it will be detrimental to the look of the conservation area and will harm the aesthetic setting of the Church which is a Grade 1 Listed Building. Any development in a Conservation Area should either enhance or preserve the special character of the Conservation Area and this is felt to be contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan design statements.

It is assumed that the application is as a result of a safeguarding issue, however the council wonders if alternatives have been investigated to address the issue before this fencing is deemed necessary. For example, it is considered that the returns around the pedestrian gates are particularly poorly designed, adding extra fencing, when just some additional height to the gates or lowering of gates at the front, would be less intrusive and potentially resolve the safeguarding issue. Please ask that all alternatives are considered instead of this highly inappropriate style fencing.

#### **PCC Property Services**

No comments received

## Historic England

Awaiting comments – any comments received will be reported in the Update Report

## Local Residents/Interested Parties

Initial consultations: 9

Total number of responses: 1

Total number of objections: 1

Total number in support: 0

From 2 consultations, 2 letters of objection were received from the same objector, summarised below:

- Will damage tree roots
- Inappropriate design more suited to inner city
- Not appropriate for conservation area – will harm view of church
- Concern about barbs on top of fence
- Dimensions are inaccurate
- Gates should not open onto highway
- Overengineered and expensive to solve simple problem

## 5 Assessment of the planning issues

The main considerations are:

- **Principle of development**
- **Design and impact to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area**
- **Neighbour amenity**
- **Highways**
- **Trees**
- **Archaeology**

### a) **Principle of development**

Policies LP2 and LP30 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) support development in principle within village envelopes including community facilities.

Castor Neighbourhood Plan Policy CSE3 supports proposals “that help to ensure the retention and development of outstanding educational provision within or immediately abutting the village envelope”.

Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) advises that the Government attaches great importance to ensuring that sufficient school places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. As such, local planning authorities are advised to give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools in decision-making.

Following advice from the Fire Safety Advisor, the school has identified requirements for additional security measures to protect the safety of pupils. It was found that the existing wall could be easily climbed and that whilst the existing fencing was likely originally intended to prevent items going into the road, it would not deter children getting out or intruders coming in, due to the space between the wall and the fence being accessible and the struts which can be easily climbed. Furthermore there is a significant gap and the bottom of the existing main double gates, which a child has already attempted to get under.

The proposed upgrading of the fencing would ensure the safety of the children within the school and also improve security to prevent unauthorised access into the school. The principle of the proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policies LP2 and 30 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019), Policy CSE3 of Castor Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF, subject to all other relevant material considerations outlined in the following sections.

**b) Design and impact to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area**

The site is sensitive in heritage terms, being both within the Castor conservation area and the site of a scheduled monument. There are also a number of listed buildings nearby including Grade I St Kyneburgha's Church, the settings of which would be affected. There are key views of the church from the Peterborough Road across the southwest boundary of the site which contribute positively to its significance.

Castor Neighbourhood Plan Policy CH1 requires sensitive and locally distinctive design among other things, and states in criterion c. that proposals should demonstrate that they do not obscure or negatively impact views of St Kyneburgha's Church, with reference made to Map 2 which indicates the locations from which the views of the church are particularly important. Further, Castor Neighbourhood Plan Policy CLU4 seeks the protection of the village's archaeological and historic features. The referenced viewpoints in CH1, Map 2, are a significant distance from the church rather than in close proximity. The views from the referenced view points would not be impacted by the proposed fencing. However it is noted that the view across the south west boundary of the site is important.

The proposed gate infill would have minimal impact by virtue of its small scale. The proposed fencing is of a type commonly used around school premises and of an appropriate colour and would not be dissimilar in scale and appearance to the existing fencing. It would therefore not appear incongruous or completely out of character. However, as it would be slightly taller (by 150mm) and extend further around the northwest boundary, it would have a greater visual impact than the existing fence and would result in a degree of less than substantial harm (albeit at the lower end of the scale) to the heritage assets mentioned above and their settings.

Local Plan Policy LP19, read together with Paragraph 208 of the NPPF 2023 requires that any less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset or its setting, should be weighed against the public benefit. In respect of this proposal, there are significant public benefits including enhanced security for the school and safety/welfare of its pupils. These public benefits are considered to outweigh the very limited degree of less than substantial harm that the proposal would cause, over and above the existing situation.

On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies LP16 and LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019), Policies CLU4 and CH1 of the Castor Neighbourhood Plan Policy and the NPPF

**c) Archaeology**

Castor Neighbourhood Plan Policy CLU4 seeks the protection of the village's archaeological and historic features. Due to the site's location within the boundaries of a Scheduled Monument, the Council's Archaeologist has advised that no works must commence until Scheduled Monument Consent has been obtained and that a condition is required for the submission and approval of a Written Scheme of Investigation. The applicant has provided evidence of the scheduled monument consent and the WSI can be secured by condition. On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and Castor Neighbourhood Plan Policy CLU4.

**d) Neighbour amenity**

Due to the nature, scale and siting of the proposed fence, gate and modified existing gate, there would be no adverse amenity impact on nearby residents. On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP17 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

### e) Highways

As the gates would continue to open inwards with the hinged infill panel, there would be no adverse impact on highway or pedestrian safety. On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP13 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

### f) Trees

It was noted that there are various trees sited along the northeast boundary wall. An appropriate tree protection plan and arboricultural method statement has been submitted to ensure that the installation of the new fences would not result in harm to the trees, and that work is carried out by hand. This has been secured by conditions. On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP29 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

## 6 Conclusions

Although the proposal would result in some limited additional visual impact and less than substantial harm (over and above the existing situation), on balance, this is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits of enhanced security for the school and its pupils. Subject to the imposition of the attached conditions, the proposal is therefore acceptable and in accordance with all relevant policies.

## 7 Recommendation

The case officer recommends that Planning Permission (Regulation 3) is **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

- C 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- C 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- Location plan E6/02
- Proposed fence line E6/02/10/10
- Fence line and details E6/02/10/20
- Existing and proposed gates (Received 20 July 2023)
- Bettafence Nylofor 3D Light powder coated weldmesh panel, Black (Received 10 August 2023)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- C 3 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, have secured Archaeological Monitoring and Recording to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority in order that groundwork operations may be observed and recorded. The Archaeological Monitoring and Recording shall be in accordance with a written programme and specification, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan and Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- C 4 The holes for the installation of the posts for the fencing must be dug by hand only, with regard to and in accordance with modern arboricultural practices. The works must be carried out in strict accordance with the approved AMS & TPP (received 09 May 2024). In addition, the pruning/cutting of roots greater than 20mm diameter must be carried out under the supervision of an arboriculturist.

Reason: In the interest of safeguarding the health of existing trees, in accordance with Policy LP29 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

Copies to Councillors – Councillor Neil Boyce  
Councillor Peter Hiller

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