

Bronte School
Mayfield
7, Pelham Road
Gravesend
Kent
DA11 0HN

Gravesham Borough Council - Planning

Application for Consent (Reference PP-11865134)

Development of the Car Park of Bronte School

Heritage Statement

Introduction

Situated on the north-west side of Pelham Road, Gravesend, Bronte School is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls, aged from 3 to 11. There are around 150 children in the School, in 8 classes, from Kindergarten to Year 6.

The School's premises comprise:

- School building. The three storey building, "Mayfield", dates from 1875. It is one of the first concrete buildings built in the UK. There is a more modern conservatory attached on the north-west side of the building. The building and the conservatory are Grade 2 listed (Historic England List Entry Number 1376500).
- Front garden. An attractive area between the front wall/railings and the building itself (see photographs IMG 1926 and IMG 1928 in 'Supporting Documents'). Occasional use by children.
- Rear Play Area and Garden Both are extensively used by the children. The play area has an artificial surface, together with play equipment (see IMG 1919). The garden has flower beds, vegetable/bulb raised beds and a grassed area (IMG 1923). In recent years, two native trees have been planted, an oak, and a wild service tree (IMG 1924).
- Car Park. The car park is the subject of this application. The proposed development, for which planning consent is here sought, is the conversion of around 60% of the car park into an attractive, landscaped sports/play area, the remaining 40% being retained for parking.

History of Mayfield

The building was in private hands until the 1920s, mostly under the ownership of Isaac Johnson, who had conceived and designed the house. He owned a local cement manufacturing business - hence his use of concrete. He and his wife, Eleanor, had a large family of 11 children, and it is an appealing thought that from the start the house echoed to the sounds of children.

In 1926, the house (which had been sold to another private owner by Mrs Johnson, after her husband's death in 1911) was sold to the local authority, to be used as a technical school. There were wooden workshop huts to the rear of the main house. Eventually the house passed to the local girls' grammar school, which in due course adopted the name "Mayfield Grammar School for Girls", around 20 years ago. In 1999, the building was purchased by Peers Carter from the Grammar School to form new premises for Bronte School, then located in Parrock Street. The building thus has a history of educational use since 1926.

The current owner, and applicant for this proposal, Nicholas Clements, and the Headmistress of Bronte, Mrs Emma Wood, seek to recognise and preserve the absorbing heritage of the building and the School. The School website has a summary of the history of the School, and to this will shortly be added details about the history of the building, from its foundation by Isaac Johnson to its present usage.

The western facet of the building has little attractiveness and the car park, enclosed on two sides by wire mesh, is extremely functional. This lends importance to the proposals, which seek to enhance the whole car park area.

Design of the New Areas

New Car Park

The new car park will continue to be bounded with Pelham Road by the attractive low wall/railings which form the front of the whole site. The boundary with the new sports/play area involves brick raised beds, inbuilt brick/hardwood benches, a winter jasmine screen, and the higher mesh fence to retain flying balls (see the two png drawings). Brickwork will seek to reflect the Victorian bricks used in the various residential properties along Pelham Road, notably London Yellow Stock.

The detailed design of the boundaries with Mayfield has not yet been established, but is likely to comprise railings and a beech hedge (boundary with sports/play area) and a yew hedge (boundary with car park).

New Sports/Play Area

The new sports/play area will be marked out as multi use. The artificial surface will be different tones of green.

Summary

The heritage of the Bronte School site has been carefully researched, and it is intended that this proposal, with its attention to high quality design, should fit well with the long history of the School and of the building. Design details look to provide effectiveness of function (parking, sport, play, parental area) as well as referencing the past. The latter is intended to be achieved across the site as a whole by choice of plants (natives wherever possible), retention of high quality features such as the front railings, and the use of high quality materials (bricks, railings) for the new boundaries.

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