

Case No: 1201214FUL (FULL PLANNING APPLICATION)

Proposal: CHANGE OF USE FROM DERELICT LAND TO STAFF CAR PARK FOR RAMSEY SPINNING INFANTS SCHOOL

Location: LAND REAR OF 3 TO 11 SCHOOL LANE

Applicant: HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (FAO MRS J DRUMMOND)

Grid Ref: 528525 285068

Date of Registration: 07.08.2012

Parish: RAMSEY

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVE

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Panel because the District Council is the applicant. The application relates to a 0.06 hectare parcel of open land to the rear of a row of residential properties fronting School Lane (nos. 3-13), within the town of Ramsey and the Conservation Area. The land backs onto the Spinning Infants School and the footpath that links the School with Whytefield Road runs along the western boundary. The District Council is the landowner, but the vehicle access to the land, which is from School Lane and through the adjacent parking court/garage block, is reportedly owned by the Luminus Group. A locked bollard currently restricts the use of this access to residents.
- 1.2 The land is mostly overgrown although parts are covered by the concrete floor slab of a former building that was used by the Ramsey table tennis club. There are trees growing along the south and west boundaries. The land is enclosed by a wall and fence (approx. 2m high) along the southern boundary and by a chain link fence (approx. 1m high) along the western boundary.
- 1.3 Planning permission is sought by the District Council as a joint initiative with the County Council to change the use of the land to a staff car park (15 spaces) to serve the Spinning Infant School. Access to the land would be off School Lane and through the adjacent parking court. An amended drawing was submitted to clarify the route of access from the land to the highway and this was sent out for re-consultation.
- 1.4 It is reported that the infant school previously shared staff parking with the adjacent Library (approx. 8-10 spaces), but now that the Library site is in the process of being transferred from the County Council to a local community volunteer run pre-school, the staff parking for the infant school will be used as the children's outdoor play area.

- 1.5 The wider benefit to the community of that transfer will be that the pre-school and infant school will be on the same site, bringing more cohesion between the two educational establishments with an easier transmission process for the children.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development - an economic role, a social role and an environmental role - and outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Under the heading of Delivering Sustainable Development, the Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for : building a strong, competitive economy; ensuring the vitality of town centres; supporting a prosperous rural economy; promoting sustainable transport; supporting high quality communications infrastructure; delivering a wide choice of high quality homes; requiring good design; promoting healthy communities; protecting Green Belt land; meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change; conserving and enhancing the natural environment; conserving and enhancing the historic environment; and facilitating the sustainable use of minerals.

For full details visit the government website

<http://www.communities.gov.uk> and follow the links to planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Policy.

3. PLANNING POLICIES

Further information on the role of planning policies in deciding planning applications can also be found at the following website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk> then follow links Planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Information and Guidance, Planning Guidance and Advice and then Creating and Better Place to Live

- 3.1 East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008) Policies viewable at <http://www.go-east.gov.uk> then follow links to Planning, Regional Planning then Related Documents

- **ENV6: “The Historic Environment”** – within plans, policies, programmes and proposals, Local Planning Authorities and other agencies should identify, protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment of the region including Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.
- **ENV7 – “Quality in the Built Environment”** – requires new development to be of a high quality which complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area and promotes urban renaissance and regeneration

- 3.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003)
Saved policies from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk> follow the links to environment, planning, planning policy and Structure Plan 2003.

- **None relevant**
- 3.3 Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan95
- **En5: “Conservation area character”** - development within or directly affecting Conservation Areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character or appearance.
 - **En18: “Protection for countryside features”** – offers protection for important site features including trees, woodlands, hedges and meadows.
- 3.4 Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002) Saved policies from the Huntingdon Local Plan Alterations 2002 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan - Then click on "Local Plan Alteration (2002)
- **None relevant**
- 3.5 Policies from the Adopted Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2009 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning then click on Planning then click on Planning Policy and then click on Core Strategy where there is a link to the Adopted Core Strategy.
- **CS1: “Sustainable development in Huntingdonshire”** – all development will contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development, having regard to social, environmental and economic issues. All aspects will be considered, including design, implementation and function of development.
- 3.6 Policies from the Development Management DPD: Proposed Submission 2010 are relevant.
- **E1: “Development Context”** – development proposals shall demonstrate consideration of the character and appearance of the surrounding environment and the potential impact of the proposal.
 - **E3: “Heritage Assets”** – proposals which affect the District’s heritage assets or their setting should demonstrate how these assets will be protected, conserved and where appropriate enhanced.
 - **E5: “Tree, Woodland and Hedgerows”** – proposals shall avoid the loss of, and minimise the risk of, harm to trees, woodland or hedgerows of visual, historic or nature conservation value, including ancient woodland and veteran trees. They should wherever possible be incorporated effectively within the landscape elements of the scheme.
 - **E10: “Parking Provision”** – car and cycle parking should accord with the levels and layout requirements set out in Appendix 1 ‘Parking Provision’. Adequate vehicle and cycle parking facilities shall be provided to serve the needs of the development. Car free

development or development proposals incorporating very limited car parking provision will be considered acceptable where there is clear justification for the level of provision proposed, having consideration for the current and proposed availability of alternative transport modes, highway safety, servicing requirements, the needs of potential users and the amenity of occupiers of nearby properties.

- **H7: “Amenity”** – development proposals should safeguard the living conditions for residents and people occupying adjoining or nearby properties.

3.7 Policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 – Draft Strategic Options and Policies; and Development Management Policies (2012) are relevant.

- **Draft Policy 4: “Scale of development in Ramsey Spatial Planning Area”** – sustainable development proposals will be acceptable where appropriately located within the built up area of Ramsey or Bury.
- **Draft Policy 9: “The Built-up area”** – defines what is and what is not considered to be part of the built-up area.
- **DM6: - “Parking provision”** – development proposals should ensure that sufficient parking is provided to meet its needs and minimise impacts on existing neighbouring uses.
- **DM13: – “Good design and sustainability”** – high standards of design is required for all new sustainable development and the built environment.
- **DM14: “Quality of development”** – requires development proposals to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of the proposed development and its surroundings.
- **DM25: “Trees, woodland and related features”** – A sustainable development proposal will be acceptable where it avoids the loss of, and minimises the risk of harm to trees, woodland, hedges or hedgerows of visual, historic or nature conservation value, including orchards, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees.
- **DM27: “Heritage assets and their settings”** – to protect and conserve the district’s heritage assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas and related assets. A sustainable development proposal will be acceptable where it avoids or minimises conflict with the conservation of any affected heritage asset and the setting of any heritage asset.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 90/0624 – additional use for toddlers club (mornings only between Monday and Friday), permitted for a temporary period of 5 years.
- 4.2 E66.64 – prefabricated club room, permitted 1964 and reportedly used for table tennis.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 **Ramsey Town Council – recommend refusal** (copy attached).

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 Received 1 letter from the occupier of 9 School Lane, who raises the following concerns:
- the vehicle entrance to the proposed car park is a safety hazard as it serves 15 garages.
 - children will be running from the playground and across the proposed car park and through the garage block to School Lane.
 - Luminus had to erect a locking bollard at the junction of the access to the garage block and School Lane to stop parking on this private land.
 - the vehicle entrance to the proposed car park should be along the side of the old Library by making an opening in the wall; the skip lorries already use this access.

7. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- 7.1 The main issues to consider are the principle of the proposal, impact on highway safety, impact on neighbour amenity, visual impact and effect on the Conservation Area and whether the health and well being of the adjacent trees can be safeguarded.

Principle:

- 7.2 The land is located relatively close to the centre of the Town and it is surrounded by built development. In this regard the land is located entirely within the built-up area of the Town, where the use of the land as proposed is acceptable in principle, subject to other considerations. If approved, it would be necessary to limit the use of the car park to staff at the infant school because this is the basis on which the application has been presented, considered and consulted upon.

Highway safety:

- 7.3 The change of use of the land to a staff car park is being proposed because it is reported that the staff car park at the adjacent former Library will cease to be made available for parking after the former Library site has been transferred to a new user.
- 7.4 Parking within School Lane is mostly unrestricted and it has been observed and reported that School Lane becomes relatively congested especially at school drop off/pick up times, in a similar manner to that experienced on many roads within close proximity to a school.
- 7.5 Because the proposed car park will serve staff at the infant school as opposed to catering for any planned expansion of the school, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposal would generate any additional vehicle movements to and from the School that would materially exacerbate congestion within nearby roads.

- 7.6 In fact, the capacity of the proposed staff car park, which provides approx. 5 more spaces than the existing staff car park at the former Library, is likely to have the benefit of reducing the need for staff to park within nearby highways and therefore it is likely to have a neutral - if not positive - effect on highway congestion. If this application is not permitted, then it is likely that existing staff will have no alternative but to park on the surrounding roads.
- 7.7 The geometry of the junction of the access to the land with the highway appears to provide satisfactory visibility to the north and south along School Lane, and across the footway and front gardens of the adjacent residential properties. The front boundaries of these properties are demarcated by low height boundary walls that do not significantly obstruct visibility.
- 7.8 There is likely to be a regular pattern of staff vehicle journeys to and from the proposed car park throughout the school week, and it is anticipated that most journeys will be made in the morning before the start of the school day (approx. 07:30-08:00) and from the school after the end of the day (approx. 15:30-16:00), although exceptions to this are likely depending on specific staff roles such as part time and flexible working. This is likely to ensure that most of the staff journeys to the proposed car park do not coincide with the vehicle journeys transporting pupils to the school, so that the proposal does not significantly exacerbate congestion in the nearby roads. Staff journeys are also unlikely to coincide with children walking to and from the school.
- 7.9 The shared use of the vehicle access through the parking court/garage block to the rear of the residential properties along School Lane, by both residents and school staff, might occasionally lead to the situation arising whereby vehicles exiting and entering the access are unable to pass by one another. This situation is not considered to pose an undue highway safety risk because there appears to be ample space within the parking court to allow vehicles to manoeuvre without forcing drivers to reverse out into the highway.
- 7.10 Because the vehicle access is segregated from the footways serving the adjacent dwellings (nos. 3-25 School Lane) by a raised kerb and narrow metal bollards, it is not considered that the potential for conflict between vehicles being driven to/from the proposed car park and pedestrians walking to/from the existing dwellings would pose a significant safety risk.
- 7.11 It is noted that the access to the land, where it extends across third party land, is restricted by a locked bollard that was reportedly installed by Luminus to prevent unauthorised access to the car parking court by drivers collecting/dropping off children at the infant school. Access across this land, including control over the locked bollard, is a civil matter between the parties that would not prevent the determination of this application.
- 7.12 It is reported that the proposed use of this land would create an alternative access for children to walk between the infant school and School Lane, and this is considered by a resident to be a safety hazard. This concern is noted and while there is no reason to believe that the proposal would create an alternative pedestrian route for

members of the public to gain access to the school grounds, and the school will need to consider whether it is necessary to manage access between the school and staff car park.

Impact on neighbour amenity:

- 7.13 As explained above, there is likely to be a regular pattern of vehicle journeys to and from the proposed car park throughout the working school week, with most journeys being made to the site in the morning before the start of the school day and from the site after the end of the school day. Depending on staff roles there could be vehicle journeys throughout the day as a result of part time working or flexible working, but on the whole, journeys to and from the proposed car park will mostly take place over reasonably social hours during the school week, with fewer journeys - if any - at the weekends and school holidays.
- 7.14 The vehicle access to the land where it extends between the frontage residential properties (nos 11-17 School Lane) is reasonably wide and there are relatively few window openings in the side walls of these properties. In fact the pattern of window and door openings indicates that the entrances to these properties at ground floor level face the access with bathrooms at first floor level. The rear gardens of nos. 3-11 School Lane are enclosed by reasonably robust 2m high timber fences and the side boundary enclosing the garden of no. 11/13 School Lane which abuts the access, is built from a tall approx. 2.5m high brick wall.
- 7.15 There is no doubt that vehicle movements to and from the proposed car park will generate levels of noise and disturbance that will have an effect on the amenities of the occupiers of the nearby dwellings. However, no objections have been received on these grounds and the effects of this are not considered to be unacceptably detrimental to the amenities of the occupiers of these nearby dwellings, because as explained above, the pattern of use of the car park limits the timing of noise and disturbance to reasonably social hours and the existing boundary treatment and width of the access will further limit the effects of noise to an acceptable extent.
- 7.16 The potential for light pollution and glare effecting neighbouring residential occupiers is a matter than can be controlled by securing a scheme for any artificial lighting of the proposed car park by condition.

Visual impact and effect on the Conservation Area:

- 7.17 The land in its current undeveloped and overgrown state has no discernable visual impact in public views from the adjacent footpath to Whytefield Road, and it is mostly screened in views from other public vantage points by the infant school buildings and nearby residential properties.
- 7.18 The trees that are growing close to the south and west boundaries are not formally protected by a preservation order (TPO) but they do make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

7.19 Given how the site is predominantly screened in public views it is not considered that its use for car parking would be significantly detrimental to the character and appearance of the locality; especially not when set against the contribution of the staff car park to the operation of the school and its effect of controlling, to a degree, the number of cars parked within the highway.

7.20 The surfacing of the proposed car park will not be critical in terms of visual impact, but the potential for light pollution and glare from any artificial lighting would be controlled by condition.

Impact on trees:

7.21 The existing trees close to the south and west boundaries make a positive contribution to visual amenity and the roots of these trees could be harmed by excavations to create a new surface or by site clearance works. The Council's Tree Officer advises that a suitable method of surfacing the land could be secured by condition to safeguard the health and well being of these trees.

Other matters:

7.22 The concern raised by the occupier of no. 9 School Lane that the proposal would be a safety hazard is addressed above. The concerns relating to the locking bollard at the junction of the access to the parking court with School Lane is a civil matter that would not preclude determination of the application. The comment that the vehicle entrance to the proposed car park should be along the side of the old Library by making an opening in the wall is noted, but could not be provided because the former Library is being transferred for use a pre-school facility as explained above. Furthermore, the access alongside of the old library is the main pedestrian access for parents dropping off and collecting children.

Conclusion:

7.23 The proposed use of the land as staff car parking for the infant school will bring the land back into a productive use and it will have the benefit of absorbing an otherwise increased demand for staff parking within the highway that will result from the loss of the existing staff parking at the former Library site. While the use of the land would have notable effects, including some impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, these effects are not significantly harmful in planning terms and would be outweighed by the overall benefits of the proposal.

7.24 The proposed development is considered to be compliant with relevant national and local planning policy, and can therefore be approved as:

- it is acceptable in principle.
- would not be significantly detrimental to highway safety.
- would not detrimentally harm the amenities of neighbouring occupiers of land and buildings.
- the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved.

- the health and well being of trees would be safeguarded.

7.25 For these summary reasons the proposal is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, policies ENV6 and ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008, policies En5 and En18 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995, policy CS1 of the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009, policies E1, E3, E5, E10 and H7 of the Huntingdonshire Development Management DPD: Proposed Submission 2010 and policies 4, 9, DM6, DM13, DM14, DM25 and DM27 from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 – Draft Strategic Options and Policies; and Development Management Policies (2012).

RECOMMENDATION – APPROVE subject to conditions to include:

- restrict use of the car park for school staff parking only.
- method statement for excavations within the root areas of the trees.
- scheme for artificial lighting of car park

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CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquiries about this report to **Mr Gavin Sylvester Assistant Development Management Officer 01480 387070**

To: Sylvester, Gavin (Planning)/[O=HUNTS DISTRICT COUNCIL/OU=HDC/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=GSYLVESTER];

Subject: 1201214FUL - proposed car park

Sent: Fri 10/12/2012 10:54:02 AM

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Hi Gavin

The above was discussed last night and unanimously rejected in it's present form.

Whilst my members see the need for the car park and are generally in support of the project it was felt that the proposed entrance would be a considerable danger hazard.

Traffic around the area is usually bad particularly at the start and break up of the school, with children running around.

It was felt other accesses to the area should be investigated.

Regards

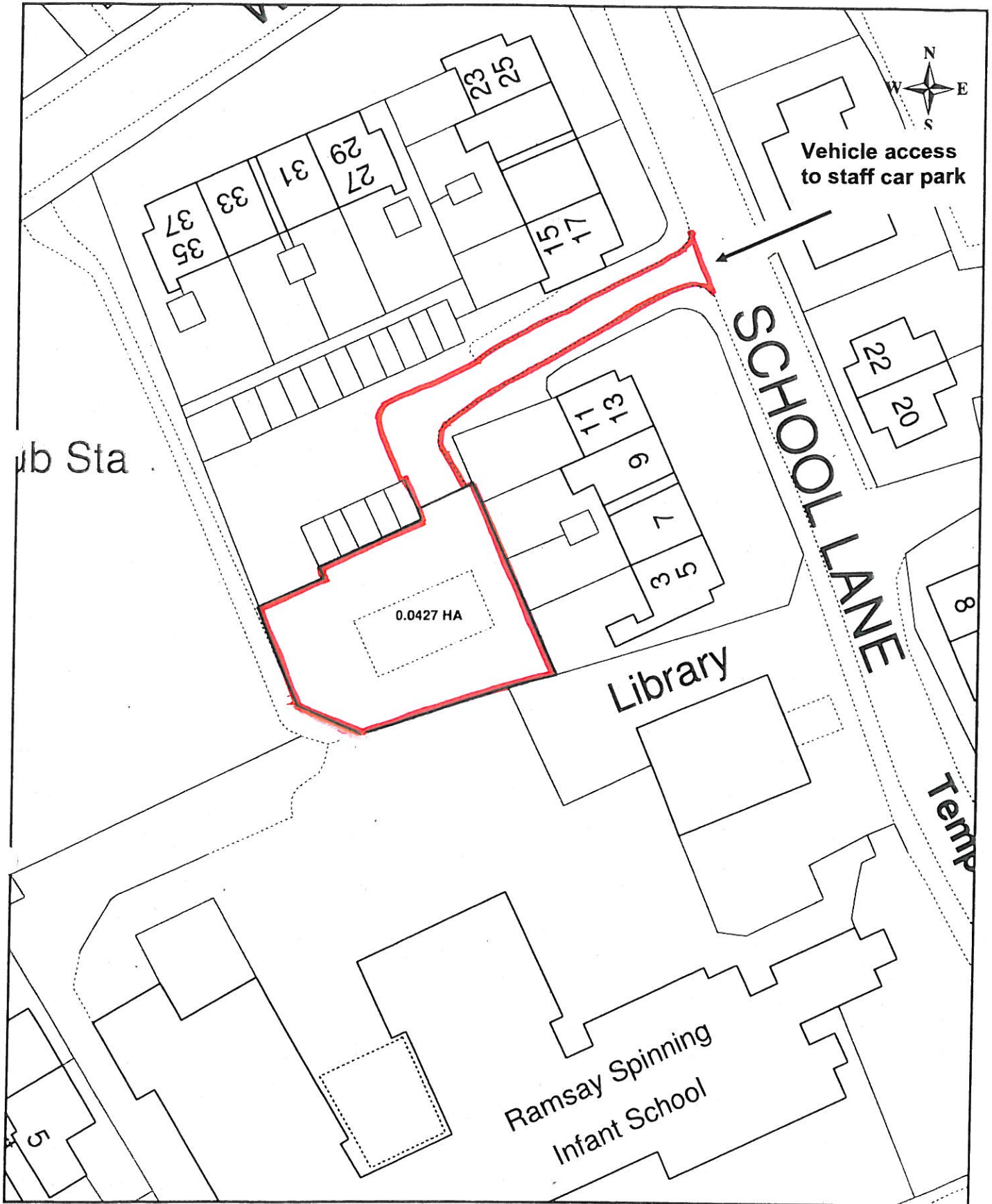
Gary Cook
Town Clerk
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HDC Land at Ramsey



Scale (at A4): 1:500

Date: 12/05/2010

By: av106

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