



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-301656-18

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<b>Development</b>	To construct new 20 metre by 40 metre synthetically surfaced sport pitch, erection of sport fencing with netting and all associated site development works at Roxborough Td., Co. Roscommon
<b>Location</b>	Roxborough Td., Co. Roscommon
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Roscommon County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	18/59
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Roxboro National School
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant permission
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Tadhg Kilcummins
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> July 2018
<b>Inspector</b>	Donal Donnelly

## **1.0 Site Location and Description**

- 1.1. The appeal site is located in the townland of Roxborough approximately 4km north-east of Roscommon town. Access to the site is via a network of local roads off the N61 to the west and N63 to the south. The surrounding rural area is characterised by agricultural land mostly in pastoral use.
- 1.2. Roxborough National School is situated to the south of a “T” junction alongside a number of dwellings. There is a church located on the eastern approach road to the junction and a disused pub/ petrol station to west. However, there is no distinctive village or reduced speed limit signage.
- 1.3. The school site occupies an area of approximately 1.7 hectares which also includes preschool facilities in a separate building. The main school building is adjoined by a school yard/ court to the front and a grassed area to the south-west. The enrolment for the school for 2017/ 2018 was 216 pupils, an increase from 207 the previous year.

## **2.0 Proposed Development**

- 2.1. Planning permission is sought for the following:
  - Construction of a new 20m x 40m synthetically surfaced sports pitch;
  - Erection of sports fencing with netting; and
  - All associated site development works.

## **3.0 Planning Authority Decision**

### **3.1. Decision**

- 3.1.1. Roscommon County Council issued notification of decision to grant permission subject to three conditions.
- 3.1.2. Condition 3 states that the pitch shall be used for purposes solely incidental to the use of the existing school.

### 3.2. **Planning Authority Reports**

- 3.2.1. The recommendation to grant permission in the Planner's Report reflects the decision of the Planning Authority.
- 3.2.2. Under the assessment, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan relating to recreational facilities.
- 3.2.3. Further information was sought from the applicant on the proposed use and lighting of the sports pitch, and details of all existing and proposed developments annotated on a site layout plan. In response, it was confirmed that the pitch will be used exclusively for the school and that no lighting is proposed. The response was acceptable to the Planning Authority.
- 3.2.4. The Roads Section had no objection as long as the playing pitch is used for school activities only and not by third parties which may create parking issues.

### 4.0 **Planning History**

#### Roscommon County Council Reg. Ref: 00/1760

- 4.1. Permission granted in January 2001 for an extension and alterations to the existing school, creation of a new vehicular access, provision of new sewage treatment plant with percolation area and all associated site works.

#### Roscommon County Council Reg. Ref: 10/419

- 4.2. Permission granted in October 2010 for the construction of a 101 sq.m. extension to accommodate an additional classroom, access hallway and store room with all ancillary site works.

#### Roscommon County Council Reg. Ref: 13/258

- 4.3. Permission granted in October 2013 for the construction of a 50.2 sq.m. extension to accommodate 3 additional resource classrooms, access hallway and alterations to the west elevation.

Roscommon County Council Reg. Ref: 13/430

- 4.4. Permission granted in June 2012 for the construction of an extension to accommodate an additional classroom and access hallway with all ancillary site works.

Roscommon County Council Reg. Ref: 14/144

- 4.5. Permission granted in October 2014 for the replacement of the existing wastewater treatment system for the school.

Roscommon County Council Reg. Ref: 16/12

- 4.6. Permission granted in May 2016 for an extension to accommodate an additional classroom and access hallway with all ancillary site works.

## **5.0 Policy Context**

### **5.1. Roscommon County Development Plan, 2014-2020**

- 5.1.1. Section 8.3 of the Development Plan sets out the Council's policies for education. Policy 8.17 states that "schools should be located on easily accessible sites and applications for education developments will be expected to meet the Council's Standards with regard to car parking, building design, landscaping and access for people with disabilities. These standards will be applicable whether the proposed development is for a new educational facility or an extension to an existing one."
- 5.1.2. It is a policy of the Council (8.8) to "encourage the dual-use of existing educational and public buildings and lands for community facilities, as well as the use of vacant buildings."
- 5.1.3. It is stated in Section 9.25.1 (Development Management Guidelines and Standards for Schools) that provision must be made within the school site for adequate car parking (at a rate of 3 per classroom), bus parking, pick-up/ drop-off areas, informal hard surface play area and areas for organised sport activities.

## 6.0 The Appeal

### 6.1. Grounds of Appeal

6.1.1. A third party appeal against the Council's decision was submitted by an adjoining resident. The grounds of appeal and main points raised in this submission are summarised as follows:

- School has seen extensive transformation since 1998, altering capacity from a 3 classroom school to maximum capacity 8 classroom with 3 additional resource room facilities in 2018.
- School accommodates approximately 220 pupils and site is co-occupied by a community pre-school.
- School has been subject to intensified concerns surrounding its traffic management systems as expansions have developed throughout the years.
- Daily traffic chaos and unsafe practices of collecting/ delivering children is affecting private access points.
- School has failed to effectively plan for its future development in the context of the physical space available to it.
- It feels unsustainable to expect a synthetic sports pitch to remain limited for sole usage to the school contrary to Development Plan Policy 9.25.1 that "school buildings should be multi-functional and available to community use outside school hours". Future traffic difficulties will be a certain feature of its community demand.
- It is not necessary to allow such traffic chaos to occur on a busy rural road when the school occupies such vast space.
- Site layout maps identify a 'no parking zone' along front of school's outside walls – this provision is not effective or applicable.
- It remains feasible to rectify the hazardous road scenario by extending the current car park further back into the current field.

- The development of a school of such capacity in an area not equipped to accommodate the infrastructural changes increased traffic will generate is the responsibility of the Planning Department.
- Board is requested to refuse permission to enable the authorities to reappraise the current dangerous environment.

## 6.2. Applicant Response

6.2.1. Submission returned as being late.

## 6.3. Planning Authority Response

6.3.1. No response.

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1. I consider that this appeal should be assessed under the following headings:

- Development principle
- Intensification and traffic impact
- Usage of proposed facility

## 7.2. Development Principle

7.2.1. The proposal to provide a synthetically surfaced sport pitch, and associated fencing and netting at a location within an established school grounds is acceptable in principle and in accordance with Development Plan policies aimed at facilitating the improvement of existing educational services and facilities. It should also be noted that the site of the proposed development is on part of an existing grass pitch and there will also be sufficient area remaining for sporting activities.

## 7.3. Intensification and Traffic Impact

7.3.1. The main grounds of appeal put forward by the appellant relate to the increase in capacity at this rural school over the past 20 years and the associated traffic impacts during school drop off and collection. It is submitted that unsafe practices are

affecting private access points and this should not occur on a busy rural road when the school occupies a wider space. The appellant considers a 'no parking zone' to the front of the school to be ineffective and inapplicable and that the current car park should be extended into the school grounds.

7.3.2. I would be in agreement with the appellant that there has been an emerging issue with urban dwellers utilising nearby rural schools rather than local schools within walking distance. Rural schools are more difficult to service by bus and the dispersed nature of the population and condition of rural roads mean that walking or cycling to school is unsafe. Children are therefore dropped off and picked up in individual cars and this results in significant adverse impact on the surrounding rural road network.

7.3.3. Notwithstanding this, the Board can only assess the planning application before it and any impact it may have on the surrounding area. The applicant confirmed following a request for further information that the proposed pitch will be for the exclusive use of the school and therefore I would be in agreement that there will be no issues regarding further intensification of use and traffic impact associated with the proposed development. It should be noted that the Planning Authority attached a condition to its decision stating that the pitch shall be used solely for purposes solely incidental to the use of the existing school.

7.3.4. There are no proposals for floodlighting at the proposed pitch and therefore related issues regarding impact of surrounding residential amenity do not arise in this case.

#### **7.4. Usage of the Proposed Facility**

7.4.1. The appellant refers to Development Plan Policy 8.8 which seeks to "encourage the dual-use of existing educational and public buildings and lands for community facilities, as well as the use of vacant buildings." It is submitted that it is unsustainable to expect a synthetic sports pitch to remain limited for sole usage to the school contrary to this policy.

7.4.2. The applicant submitted in response to a further information request that the proposed pitch will be used exclusively by the school and this is reflected by the above-mentioned condition attached by the Planning Authority. Thus, planning

permission would be required for any future proposals to expand the usage of the facility to the wider community.

## 7.5. **Appropriate Assessment**

- 7.5.1. Having regard to the nature of the proposed development and/or nature of the receiving environment and/or proximity to the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

## 8.0 **Recommendation**

- 8.1. It is considered that the proposed development should be granted for the reasons and considerations hereunder.

## 9.0 **Reasons and Considerations**

Having regard to the established use at this location and to the proposal to enhance existing outdoor sporting facilities for the exclusive usage of the school, it is considered that subject to compliance with conditions below, the proposed development would not seriously injure the amenities of the area and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 10.0 **Conditions**

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the further plans/ particulars submitted on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

**Reason:** In the interest of clarity.



2. Water supply and drainage arrangements for the site, including the disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.

**Reason:** In the interest of environmental protection and public health.

3. The proposed pitch shall be used for purposes incidental to the use of the existing school only, and shall not be used, sold, let or leased for events and functions independent of the school.

**Reason:** In the interests of traffic safety and amenity.

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Donal Donnelly  
Planning Inspector

13<sup>th</sup> August 2018