

**3/14/2250/FP – Two storey Sports Hall / Teaching facility at
Chauncy School, Park Road, Ware, SG12 0DP for The Chauncy School**

Date of Receipt: 16.12.2014

Type: Full – Major

Parish: WARE

Ward: WARE – ST MARYS

RECOMMENDATION:

The Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorized to **GRANT** planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Three Year Time Limit (1T12)
2. Approved plans (2E10)
3. Three months prior to the first use of the building, the School Travel Plan shall be reviewed updated and submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter it shall be implemented in full throughout the life of the school.

Reason: To assist in achieving greater use of sustainable modes of transport.

4. Wheel washing (3V25)

Reason: To ensure that prior to commencement of development facilities are available in the interests of highway safety.

5. Construction traffic route (3V26)

Reason: To ensure that prior to the commencement of development a satisfactory route is in place in the interests of highway safety.

6. Construction hours of working – plant and machinery (6N07)

7. Piling works (2E39)

Reason: To ensure that details are agreed prior to the commencement of works having regard to the amenities of nearby residents and Policy ENV24 of the EastHerts Local Plan Second Review 2007.

8. Prior to first occupation of the development, details of a scheme to make the sports hall hereby approved available for public and community use, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the

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Local Planning Authority, and the facility shall thereafter be made available in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure that dual use is made of educational facilities in accordance with Policy LRC2 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007.

9. Prior to the commencement of development a reptile survey shall be undertaken and the report submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If reptiles are found the report shall detail a suitable mitigation strategy. Thereafter the approved migration strategy shall be implemented prior to the commencement of development.

Reason: Details are required prior to the commencement of development to safeguard protected species in accordance with Policy ENV16 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review 2007.

Directives:

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. A precautionary approach should be taken to site clearance which should be undertaken outside the bird nesting season, March to September inclusive) to protect breeding birds, nests, eggs and young. If this is not possible then a search of the area should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and if active nests are found, then clearance should be delayed until nesting has finished.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

East Herts Council has considered the applicant's proposal in a positive and proactive manner with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (Minerals Local Plan, Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD 2012 and the 'saved' policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007); the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2012 (as amended). The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application proposes the provision of a two storey detached sports hall and teaching facility with eight classrooms on land to the rear (north

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east) of the existing school buildings and north of the adjacent St Catherine's primary school. The facility is to be funded by new residential development of 47 houses, subject of a separate application (Ref: 3/14/2292/FP also reported to this Committee). Chauncy Secondary School has 1032 pupils and is permitted to expand to 1100 pupils. St Catherine's pupils (271) would also have access to the proposed facility.

- 1.2 In addition to the proposed sports hall the building would incorporate 2 teaching rooms on the ground floor, changing facilities and a fitness studio. The first floor would comprise a further 6 classrooms. The building would be 33.6m x 43m (maximum dimensions) having a footprint of 1350sq.metres. The maximum height of the building would be 10.2metresto the highest part of the sports hall part of the building.
- 1.3 The location is within an area of bushes and trees and requires the removal of vegetation and a number of the small trees. The design of the building is fairly functional and it comprises a wide span building with a low curved roof. The building will be finished in metal cladding for part of the roof and elevations and white PVC fabric for the roof and walls to provide natural lighting of the sports hall.
- 1.4 The project is needed due to increasing pupil numbers and to keep pace with regulations for improved sports facilities within the school curriculum. The building will be used from 7am to 10pm Monday to Friday and from 9am to 10pm on Saturdays. Use by others than the schools will be by arrangement will only occur when the facility is not required by the schools. This should see it being available for community use in the evenings and at weekends from 8 am to 10 pm.
- 1.5 The existing car park at the front of the school adjoining Park Road provides 78 parking spaces, the school yard 82 spaces, the top car park 21 and the annex car park 28 spaces. A total of 209 spaces. A School Travel Plan has been submitted with the application.

2.0 Site History

2.1 The relevant planning history for the site is as follows:

- 3/09/0016/FP. 5 Classrooms and toilet facilities. Approved March 2009.
- 3/07/1803/CC 5 Bay Double Mobile Classrooms. Approved Nov 2007

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- 3/01/0569/CC Single storey teaching block. Approved May 2001

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The County Council Minerals and Waste Team refer to national policy and the Waste Core Strategy and that a planning condition for a Site Waste management Plan (SWMP) is encouraged to enable maximum reuse and recovery opportunities and minimize off-site disposal.
- 3.2 The Environmental Health Officer recommends conditions for hours of working, piling and to address any unsuspected contamination.
- 3.3 Sport England have no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions relating to approval of technical specification and securing community use of the facility.
- 3.4 Herts CC (Highways) raise no objections, subject to conditions.
- 3.5 The Tree Officer: notes that two individual trees, one group and a small area of trees will require removal to create an area for the storage of materials. A number of trees within the footprint of the building will also require removal. They comprise trees that are of low quality and value. No objection is therefore raised.
- 3.6 Herts CC Ecology: raise no objection. They advise that they hold records of Slow-worm presence within a 100m of the site. They recommend that a condition requiring a reptile survey to be undertaken be imposed and subject to its findings a migration strategy proposed. An informative to protect breeding birds during site clearance is also recommended.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 Ware Town Council objects on grounds of:
- Loss of recreational green space
 - Loss of football pitches
 - Increased traffic in a congested area

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

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5.2 7 responses have been received from residents objecting to the proposal on grounds including:

- There is no clear plan for the easy or safe access by community users to the proposed siting of the sports hall. Clearly access by pedestrians and vehicles would be easier if the proposed sports hall were to be sited where the residential development is proposed.
- Proximity to adjoining properties and noise nuisance.
- Before it is built it should be assessed whether existing facilities can accommodate increased pupil numbers.
- Inadequate access, lack of parking and increased traffic congestion.
- Over-development.

5.3 178 responses have been received in support of the proposal. The majority of responses do not include further comment but the following points are raised:

- It will provide a centre of excellence for sport in Ware and provide much needed facilities for Chauncy School, primary schools and the wider community.
- The school has increased in size and needs larger sports facilities
- It is crucial that the community supports our schools.
- The proposal is clearly aligned to the national agenda for sport.
- The highway network is more than capable of accommodating any additional traffic. The current construction work at the Asda site has added to perceived disruption.
- Positive contribution to the health of children and the community
- A larger space is needed to accommodate examinations

6.0 Policy

6.1 The relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies in this application include the following:

SD1	Making development more sustainable
ENV1	Design and environmental quality
ENV2	Landscaping
LRC1	Sports and recreation facilities
LRC2	Joint provision and dual use
ENV16	Protected species
ENV17	Wildlife habitats
ENV11	Protection of existing hedgerows and trees

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TR4	Travel plans
TR7	Car parking standards

6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance are also of relevance to the determination of the application.

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main considerations in this case are:

- Principle of development
- Layout and design having regard to Policies ENV1 and ENV2
- Impact on surrounding properties.
- Provision of sports and recreation facilities and dual use having regard to Policy LRC2.
- Car parking and school travel having regard to Policies TR4 and TR7.

Principle

7.2 The site is within the school grounds but is not currently in sports and recreation use. The safeguarding principle regarding the protection of land in that use does not therefore apply. The site is currently unused scrubland with the presence of some low quality trees it is of low value in amenity terms and its development for the use proposed is considered to be acceptable.

Ecology

7.3 Given that this is a small loss to a larger area of scrubland forming the east boundary of the school grounds, subject to a condition to address migration measures for reptiles, there will be no significant impact on ecology.

Layout and design

7.4 The proposed building is substantial in scale and massing comprising a footprint of 1350sq.metres. The building would be sited on the northeast fringe of the complex of existing school buildings to the north of the adjoining St. Catherine's Junior and Infants School. The siting is approximately 50 metres from the eastern boundary of the main school site and the rear garden boundaries of the nearest residential properties.

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- 7.5 The design of the proposed building is functional. The curved roof of the hall space would dominate and this would be finished in white PVC fabric to the majority of its elevations and roof. The adjoining and linked classroom accommodation would have a pitched metal sheet profile roof finished in grey.
- 7.6 The siting and design of the building is considered to be appropriate to its use and setting. The design of the building is regarded as functional but acceptable for the proposed use and provides for an acceptable relationship within the context of the design of the existing school buildings on the site.

Impact on surrounding properties

- 7.7 The building is sited a considerable the distance to boundaries of the site and the area between comprises scrubland with trees that will soften the visual impact. It is considered that it will have little visual impact external to the site or any adverse impact on the residential amenities of the occupiers of surrounding residential properties having regard to noise and outlook.

Provision of sports facilities and dual use

- 7.8 Current indoor sports facilities are regarded as inadequate for the student intake. The proposal will provide enhanced sports facilities that will clearly be of benefit to the school and its students and to pupils of St. Catherine's School who will also have access. Furthermore, the provision of eight additional classrooms will also enhance teaching facilities. This is given weight in the decision making.
- 7.9 The school have stated that the sports hall will be intensively used for schools activity between 9 am and 6 pm during school days and there will be little opportunity for community use. The hall will be available for hire to community sports clubs from 6 pm to 10 pm during the week and at weekends at fixed rates. During Easter and summer breaks holiday clubs are already run for children aged 5 to 11 years and the hall will enhance that that activity.
- 7.10 The school already has more than a dozen outside organisations regularly making use of its existing facilities and the sports hall will enhance community sports facilities in the area. However, whilst the facilities will clearly be of substantial benefit to the school and its students, and this carries weight, the need for additional public provision in the area is limited given the facilities at Wodson Park. The weight attributed in this respect is therefore diminished to that extent.

Car parking and school travel

- 7.11 The proposed development will not of itself increase student or staff numbers and the Highway Authority is satisfied that it will not increase vehicular trips throughout the day. In the evening and at weekends some 200 on-site parking spaces are available compared to the maximum parking standard for the out of school hours sports hall use of 50 spaces. The Highway Authority is satisfied that users of the facility can be accommodated on-site with little impact on the free and safe flow of traffic along the public highway.
- 7.12 A School Travel Plan has been submitted to ensure that travellers to the school have realistic alternatives to the private car. The Highway Authority's School Travel Plan Team are satisfied that the plan meets current standards and its review is the subject of a condition.

8.0 Conclusion

- 7.13 The proposal will provide new additional sports and teaching facilities that will be of substantial benefit to the school. There is public benefit through a community use agreement but this assigned less weight as there is no demographic need for additional facilities in the area.
- 7.14 The proposals would not harm the visual appearance or amenities of the area. The removal of some poor quality trees and impact on ecology are considered to be acceptable.
- 7.15 Car parking provision and highway impact of the development are acceptable.
- 7.16 It is considered that the benefits of the proposals outweigh any harmful impacts and therefore the application is recommended for approval.