

3/10/0032/FP - First floor extension to assembly hall, insertion of roof lights and entrance canopy to create new reception and new ramp to front at St Josephs In The Park, St Marys Lane, Hertingfordbury, SG14 2LX for Mr Paul Chappell (Head of Governors).

Date of Receipt: 11.01.2010

Type: Full - Minor

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD - CASTLE

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:-

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Matching materials (2E13)
3. Tree Retention Protection (4P05)
4. Tree Surgery (4P11)

Directives

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. The applicant is advised that all species of bat are European Protected Species. Development work should proceed with caution and in the event of any bats being found, work must stop immediately and Natural England informed on 01206 796666.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies SD2, GBC1, ENV1, ENV11, ENV16, BH1 and BH12. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

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3/10/0032/FP

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract and comprises an established primary school spread across several buildings and substantial grounds. The site lies in the Metropolitan Green Belt and within the historic setting of Hertingfordbury Park, a Grade II listed country house.
- 1.2 This application proposes a first floor extension to the existing performing arts hall, the insertion of 4 no. rooflights and a new entrance canopy to the reception block, and a new pedestrian access ramp. The proposal will not affect pupil numbers.
- 1.3 As the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the application is referred to Committee for a decision.

2.0 Site History

3/09/0159/FP	Installation of a canopy	Approved with Conditions 09-Apr-2009
3/06/1376/FP	Provision of new sports playing fields, fencing and car park improvements.	Approved with Conditions 27-Sep-2006
3/06/2439/FP	Provision of a timber sports pavilion to provide changing and storage.	Approved with Conditions 02-Feb-2007

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The Conservation Officer recommends consent. She advises that the proposed development will have little or no impact on the historic boundary wall or its immediate or wider setting of Hertingfordbury Park.
- 3.2 The Landscape Officer recommends consent subject to conditions on tree retention, protection and surgery. He comments that the yew tree T25 will need some of its foliage pruned back in order to make room for the increased height of the building. The extent of tree work need not be major and main limbs should not be affected, so provided it is carried out according to good arboricultural practice, the amenity value or expected lifespan of the tree should not be adversely affected. Further information is also required to show compliance with BS 5837: 2005, i.e. to include pre development tree work, arboricultural method statement and details of ground protection and scaffolding etc.

3/10/0032/FP

- 3.3 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission.
- 3.4 Herts County Council do not require any financial contributions from this proposal.
- 3.5 County Archaeology believe the proposal is unlikely to have an impact upon significant archaeological deposits, structures or features.
- 3.6 Herts Biological Records Centre have records of bats roosting in the main house. It is possible that bats may be found in the fabric of the Reception building, particularly in the roof where the roof lights are to be fitted. HBRC consider it unreasonable to recommend a bat survey to be conducted on the Reception building. However, they do recommend that an informative should be attached to any planning permission.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 Hertford Town Council has no objection to the proposal.

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.
- 5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy

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

SD2	Settlement Hierarchy
GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV11	Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
ENV16	Protected Species
BH12	Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building

- 6.2 In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 1, (Delivering Sustainable Development), Planning Policy Guidance 2 (Green Belts) and Planning Policy Guidance 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) are considerations within this application.

7.0 Considerations

Principle of Development

- 7.1 The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt wherein inappropriate development will not be permitted. Policy GBC1 lists developments which are classed as appropriate, and this does not include extensions to existing school buildings. Very special circumstances must therefore be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm.

Scale and Design

- 7.2 The proposed first floor extension to the performing arts building will measure 12m in length and 2.5m in width and will be constructed above an existing single storey element. There will therefore be no increase in the built footprint. The extension will follow the line of the existing roof with a dormer to the front, 2 no. rooflights to the rear, and a new row of windows to the side elevation. The dormer has been designed with a lead flat roof and glazed cheeks, with the front window extending below the gutter line. Although there are no similar dormers at the school, the proposed dormer is relatively small in scale and will not be visible from the wider area. Its impact is therefore considered to be acceptable.
- 7.3 It is also proposed to block up some existing windows in the north and south elevations of the performing arts building and insert a new fire escape door in the north elevation with a simple small glazed canopy over. This is also considered to be acceptable.
- 7.4 It is proposed to refurbish the reception block to provide new facilities for art, design and technology, along with a new reception area. No additional floorspace is proposed but the existing internal layout will be reconfigured. A new entrance canopy is proposed that will measure 5m in length and 1m in depth. The canopy has been designed as a steel and glass bespoke structure supported on 4 no. steel columns. A new entrance doorway will also be provided to comply with DDA requirements. Officers consider that this will improve the appearance of the reception block and will provide a central feature to highlight the entrance to the building.
- 7.5 4 no. rooflights are proposed in the flat roof of the reception building. These are considered to be acceptable in design terms and will not be visible from the front elevation due to the presence of a parapet wall. An existing water tank will also be removed from the roof of the reception building, which will improve its appearance.

Very Special Circumstances

- 7.6 The applicants architects have undertaken and submitted a full Feasibility Study Evaluation Report based on a project brief outlined by the school. Key aims of the project are to improve the efficiency of existing space and rearrange existing activities rather than provide additional floorspace. The brief required the addition of two small music practice rooms, a large teaching space and a further room to replace the existing music room which is currently located in the reception block, divorced from the performing arts building. Three different options were considered, each raising several issues, and the submitted plans represent chosen option 2.
- 7.7 Various options were also considered to improve the Art and Design Technology facilities as the brief required an additional 10m x 10m for each space. This amount of space was not achievable without extension and additional cost, so the existing floorspace is proposed to be rearranged accordingly. Various other internal alterations form part of the school brief and will be prioritised over a five year period.
- 7.8 It is therefore clear that the proposed additional floorspace has only arisen following a thorough examination of options and consolidation of existing floorspace. The need for the improved facilities has been outlined in the school's brief, and the Feasibility Study. The additional floorspace for the performing arts building amounts to only approximately 30m², and will not increase the overall footprint of the buildings. Both the extension, and proposed alterations to the reception building are considered to be acceptable in scale, style and design, and will not impact on the wider openness of the Green Belt. The recreational Cole Green Way lies immediately south of the site but due to banking and tree cover, views from this public way are screened. Therefore, whilst the development is inappropriate in principle, Officers consider there are very special circumstances in this case that clearly outweigh the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness.

Impact on the Historic Setting

- 7.9 The building is not listed, nor is it located in a Conservation Area. However the Grade II listed Hertingfordbury Park is located to the northeast. This was an early 17th century country house, converted into a convent, then an elderly person's home, and now 4 no. residential dwellings. The northern reception building of St. Josephs in the Park was constructed out of the historic garden wall of Hertingfordbury Park, but is not listed.
- 7.10 Overall, the proposed alterations will have no impact on the historic wall or its setting, and no objection has been raised by the Conservation Officer.

Impact on Trees

- 7.11 Much of the site to the south and west is covered by a woodland Tree Preservation Order, and this includes the performing arts building. The proposed first floor extension will require some cutting back of these protected trees and will extend into the canopy area. A full tree survey has been submitted with the application and no objection has been raised by the Landscape Officer.

Highways and Access

- 7.12 There will be no change to existing vehicular access and parking arrangements. A new ramp is proposed to provide DDA compliant pedestrian access to the reception building. This will be tarmaced and will curve round to the front of the building to the west of the existing stepped footpath. A new pedestrian gate and fence is proposed to the east of the reception block to match an existing vehicular access gate. This will measure 1m high and therefore does not require planning permission. Overall, the proposal will therefore have no impact on parking or the highway network and no objection has been raised by County Highways.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, the proposed extension is of limited extent and the alterations to the reception building will improve the appearance of the building. The need for the improved facilities has been clearly justified, and relates to a well established use of the site. Officers are satisfied that the existing space is being used to its highest potential. The proposed development is acceptable in scale, form and design and will not impact on the wider openness of the Green Belt or the wider historic setting. It is therefore considered that very special circumstances exist to allow this development in the Green Belt.
- 8.2 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.