

3/10/0109/FP – Single storey modular classroom at St Josephs JMI School, Great Hadham Road, Bishop’s Stortford, CM23 2NL for St Josephs VA School.

Date of Receipt: 20.01.2010

Type: Full - Minor

Parish: BISHOP’S STORTFORD

Ward: BISHOP’S STORTFORD - SILVERLEYS

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Materials of Construction (2E11)

Directive:

1. Other legislation (01OL)

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 the 'saved' policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies GBC1 and ENV1. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies, and the grant of LPA reference 3/88/2326/FP is that permission should be granted.

_____ (010910FP.FM)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 St Josephs JMI School is located within the built up area of Bishop’s Stortford and is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site comprises an area of approximately 2.2 hectares and is sited to the east of the Thorley Park development.

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1.3 This application proposes the erection of a single storey modular classroom building to accommodate two classrooms. It would replace the mobile classroom that was approved within LPA reference 3/88/2326/FP that has recently been demolished because it was unsafe for pupils and staff to use. The applicant has commented that the children who were being taught in the mobile classroom are currently being taught in the school hall, which is not an ideal situation. The proposed unit would be sited 14metres to the east of the main school building and behind the existing nursery building that was approved under LPA reference 3/06/2195/FP. The building would form a rectangular shape, would have a floor area of 36 square metres and would reach a height of 4metres and has been designed with a gently sloping roof pitch.

2.0 Site History

2.1 The site history which can briefly be summarised as follows:

| | | |
|--------------|---|--|
| 3/88/2326/FP | Erection of mobile classroom | Approved with conditions |
| 3/96/1208/CC | Erection of single mobile classroom unit | No objections raised by the District Council |
| 3/02/1126/FP | External covered canopy areas to nursery and reception classrooms | Approved with conditions |
| 3/04/2460/FP | Erection of modular building for use by the school as an out of hours/nursery | Approved with conditions |

3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 Environmental Health has commented that they do not wish to restrict the grant of permission, provided that two conditions are added to the grant of permission. They have recommended times of operation for the construction works and any demolition at the site and also outline that no external lighting should be provided without the prior written permission from the Local Planning Authority.

3.2 Landscaping do not object to the proposal and comment that the proposed building would have a similar footprint to that of the previous structure and therefore the proposal will not have a significant impact on trees. A condition has been recommended regarding tree retention protection.

4.0 Town Council Representations

4.1 Bishop's Stortford Town Council raised no objections to this proposal.

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 Two letters of objection have been received from neighbouring properties in Windhill which raise concerns that the approval of the proposed building will result in more school places for additional pupils and will therefore exacerbate the existing parking problems at the site.

6.0 Policy

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

| | |
|------|----------------------------------|
| GBC1 | Development within the Greenbelt |
| ENV1 | Design and Environmental Quality |
| TR7 | Car Parking Standards |

6.2 In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 1, (Delivering Sustainable Development) and Planning Policy Guidance 2 (Green Belts) 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; however this does not include outbuildings within the grounds of a school. Very special circumstances must therefore be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm.

- 7.2 In this case the new building would replace the mobile classroom that was approved within LPA reference 3/88/2326/FP. This has recently been demolished because it was unsafe for pupils and staff to use. The unit will include two new classrooms, storage areas, an entrance lobby and toilets. Due to the demolition of the mobile classroom that was approved under LPA reference 3/88/2326/FP, the school currently has insufficient teaching space for the number of pupils required by Government guidelines (as specified in the Department of Children, Schools and Families Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects). The proposed new unit would therefore bring the school up to standard.
- 7.3 Whilst the proposed unit is marginally larger than the mobile structure that it is replacing, it is considered that the proposed building is of a modest size and scale and would be positioned such that it will not materially extend beyond the existing school and nursery buildings. Therefore, taking this into account and that the proposed mobile classroom will replace the mobile classroom that was granted planning permission in 1988 which was in such a poor state of repair it had to be demolished, Officers consider that very special circumstances exist to outweigh Green Belt policy.

Scale and Design

- 7.4 The modular classroom is proposed to measure 18metres in length by 12metres in width with a gently sloping roof pitch to a height of 4.1metres. The building is proposed to be finished in PVC coated steel with a roof formed of single layer hypalon. Overall this scale and design is considered to be acceptable and an improvement in the design of the mobile classroom that was approved planning permission in 1988.

Open Space

- 7.5 With regards to open space, the proposed development would be sited on top of the existing footings that have been retained from the mobile classroom that has recently been demolished. The proposed building would therefore not result in the loss of any designated recreation space.

Impact on amenity

- 7.6 Turning to the impact upon neighbour amenity, the proposed extensions are sited some distance from nearby residential properties, and therefore the proposal would not result in any impact on the occupiers of such properties.
- 7.7 With regards to the comments raised by the neighbouring properties in respect of parking matters at the school, these concerns have been taken into account. It is noted that the proposed classroom will provide additional classroom space for existing pupils at St Josephs School to replace that which was demolished, and is not proposed for a purpose that would increase existing pupil capacity at the school. Therefore, the proposed building would not increase the number of pupils who attend the school and as such will not affect the existing parking arrangements at the school.
- 7.8 It is noted that the Council's Environmental Health Section have requested various conditions to be attached to any grant of permission. With regards to the suggested conditions relating to external lighting and hours and times of operation for the construction and demolition of the site, these were suggested to protect the amenity of nearby residents. However, taking into account that the proposed building would be almost 50metres from the nearest neighbouring property, I do not consider that it would be reasonable or necessary to impose these conditions.
- 7.9 With regards to the condition recommended by the Council's Landscaping department requiring tree protection measures for the duration of the construction phase, taking into account that the proposed building would be some 12metres from the trunk of the nearest tree, I do not consider that it would be necessary to impose this condition.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Taking into account the modest proportions of the proposed development; for the reasons outlined above and taking into account that the mobile classroom that was granted in this location under LPA reference 3/88/2326/FP and has recently been demolished, it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions referred to at the head of this report.