

3/10/0785/FP – Single storey classroom block to rear of school at Mandeville School, West Road, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 0BL for The Chair of Governors, Mandeville School.

Date of Receipt: 04.05.2010

Type: Full - Minor

Parish: SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Ward: SAWBRIDGEWORTH

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Materials as on plan (2E42)

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 SD2, GBC1, TR7, ENV1 and LRC1. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies, and other material considerations, is that permission should be granted.

_____ (078510FP.SE)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The site comprises a primary school set within a site area of some 13,050m² and sited on the edge of the settlement of Sawbridgeworth within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site is bordered to the east by Crofters End residential development, to the south by West Road and open agricultural land to the north and west. The siting of the proposed classroom is fairly central within the school grounds with the school buildings to the south, and the playing fields designated as open space under policy LRC1 to the north. The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.

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1.2 The existing main school building is a single story flat roof construction of 1970s appearance. There is an existing modular classroom located to the north of the main building (approved under LPA ref: 3/94/1031/CC), which is proposed to be removed as it is in a poor state of repair. The new building is proposed to the east of this existing unit and will be located on land currently occupied by low level bushes separating the main school building with the playing fields.

2.0 Site History

2.1 The following planning history is of relevance:-

3/94/1031/CC	Erection of single mobile classroom	Approved with conditions 22 nd August 1994
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3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 No consultation responses have been received

4.0 Town Council Representations

4.1 Sawbridgeworth Town Council raised no objections to this proposal.

5.0 Other Representations

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

5.2 At the time of writing this report, no letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy

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

SD2	Settlement Hierarchy
GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
TR7	Car Parking – Standards
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
LRC1	Sport and Recreation Facilities

- 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 extensions to existing schools. 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 is required to replace the existing building to the north of the main school building which is in a poor state of repair, to allow the existing services that the school provides including a breakfast club, after school clubs and community activities to be provided. The building is proposed to provide an area for the breakfast club, a teaching space, store and toilet. The submitted Design and Access Statement notes that "currently the school has a number of initiatives in place that extend the service that the school provides, including a breakfast club, after school clubs and community activities. The school accommodation is not particularly suitable for these as the open plan nature means that people using the building have access to all the spaces, making security difficult". The applicant therefore proposes that the solution to these problems, which is driven by the need to replace the existing accommodation, is to provide the new building.
- 7.3 The proposed unit is slightly larger than the existing mobile structure, and will have limited impact on the Green Belt. The building will be positioned such that it will not materially extend beyond the existing buildings. Therefore, on the basis of the information submitted and in particular the need for the accommodation, Officers consider that very special circumstances exist to outweigh Green Belt policy.

Scale and Design

- 7.4 The building is proposed to measure 11.5m wide and 9m deep with a shallow pitched roof reaching a maximum height of 5m. The building is proposed to be finished in brickwork to match that of the school building, with a concrete tile roof. Overall the scale and design of the building is considered to be acceptable.

Open Space

- 7.5 The proposed development will result in the loss of approximately 103.5m² of designated recreation space, which is protected under policy LRC1. It is Officers opinion that the development will not impact on the layout of the existing playing pitches, and the loss of green space is considered to be minimal. Furthermore, as stated earlier in this report, it is proposed that the existing classroom block is to be removed and the area on which that building is currently sited will be re-seeded. Therefore having regard to the reinstatement of this land to playing space, overall there would be a limited loss of recreation space within the site. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policy LRC1.

Other Matters

- 7.6 It is considered that no harm will arise to neighbouring amenity from the proposal given the distance to neighbouring properties, the nearest of which is sited approximately 40 metres from the proposed building.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, although the development cannot be considered as appropriate development in the Green Belt, Officers consider that circumstances exist to outweigh this policy objection. The existing building which is used to accommodate the services that the school provides is in a bad state of repair. The proposed building would provide a replacement for the existing building, and would allow the services to be continued, which the applicant states are important to the needs of children, families and the wider community. Furthermore, it is considered that the building is acceptable in scale and design and will have limited wider impact on the Green Belt.
- 8.2 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.