

**5c 3/10/0828/FP - Erection of a new day care, community and sports centre at St Elizabeth's School and Home, South End, Perry Green, Much Hadham, SG10 6EW for St Elizabeth's Day Centre**

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**Date of Receipt:** 19.05.2010

**Type:** Full – Major

**Parish:** MUCH HADHAM

**Ward:** MUCH HADHAM

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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

1. Three Year Time Limit (1T121)
2. Samples of materials (2E123)
3. Lighting Details (2E272)
4. Landscaping a, c, d, f, i, j, k, l. (4P124)
5. Landscape works implementation (4P133)
6. Construction hours of working – plant and machinery (6N072)
7. Wheel washing facilities (3V251)

#### **Directive:**

1. This planning permission gives no entitlement to affect the public rights of way on the application site. Any diversion, extinguishment or creation of a public right of way needs its own legal authority before any works affecting the right of way can be commenced. Please contact Hertfordshire County Council Transportation Planning and Policy Unit on 01992 555555, for advice regarding Footpath 44 which adjoins the site.

#### **Summary of Reasons for Decision**

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan, 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 GBC3, GBC4, TR7, ENV1, ENV2, ENV23, ENV24 and ENV25. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies and

the permission granted in July 2007 under Ipa reference 3/07/0756/FP is that permission should be granted.

\_\_\_\_\_ (082810FP.NB)

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The St Elizabeth's Centre is located to the south of Perry Green within a rural setting. The centre consists of numerous buildings of various ages and designs across the site. The Centre provides schooling and homes for children and adults who have epilepsy and associated disabilities or significant medical conditions. The School's provision is particularly aimed at young people whose education has been seriously disrupted by their various disabilities.
- 1.3 The existing day care centre is located on the northern side of the campus and comprises a building of 288 sqm area, with 49 associated parking spaces. The building provides a venue for a range of practical activities, which are mostly of an educational nature. The building is around 40 years old and requires replacement as its age and size renders it unsuitable to the requirements of the modern St Elizabeth's Centre. Surrounding the existing day care centre are open workshop buildings of some 1-1.5 storeys in height.
- 1.4 The proposed replacement day care centre would provide a gross floor space of 1,616 sqm. The majority of the proposed building would be single storey and would reach a maximum height of approximately 4.5 metres. However, part of the building would be 2 storeys and would reach a height of approximately 9 metres. The 2 storey part of the building is required to accommodate the height of a sports hall and would additionally provide rooms for storage and office space at 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The building would be fragmented by varying roof heights, a mix of materials and with variations within the detailed design. The roof form would comprise a mix of flat and mono-pitched roofs.
- 1.5 A vehicular access is proposed off the existing private access to the school which would lead to a parking area for 38 vehicles, including 3 spaces for mini buses and 5 disabled parking spaces.
- 1.6 The Planning Statement that accompanies the planning application confirms that as part of the proposals for the site the applicant intends to demolish the existing day care centre and associated portacabins.

## **2.0 Site History**

- 2.1 In July 2007 planning permission was granted for the demolition of the existing day care centre and associated portacabins and the erection of a new day care, community and sports centre under planning reference number 3/07/0756/FP. This permission has not been implemented due to a lack of funding from the Learning and Skills Council, and this current application therefore seeks permission for a reassessed and redesigned scheme.
- 2.2 A significant amount of development has taken place at the Centre over recent years in accordance with an overall strategic masterplan for the site undertaken by Ingleton Wood, the site's planning consultants. The redevelopment of the day centre is part of an overall phased programme of redevelopment.

## **3.0 Consultation Responses**

- 3.1 The County Development Unit has commented in relation to the need for waste minimisation and has suggested that these issues can be addressed by condition if permission is granted.
- 3.2 The Environment Agency has no objections to the proposed development.
- 3.3 Environmental Health has recommended conditions in relation to construction hours of working, dust and asbestos.
- 3.4 County Highways does not wish to restrict the grant of permission and have recommended conditions in relation to hard surfacing, debris from vehicles leaving the site and obstructions to the public right of way.
- 3.5 The Council's Landscape Officer recommends consent and comments that there are no significant changes from the previously approved scheme.

## **4.0 Parish Council Representations**

- 4.1 Much Hadham Parish have no objections to the planning application.

## **5.0 Other Representations**

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

## **6.0 Policy**

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

GBC3	Rural Area beyond the Green Belt
GBC4	Major Developed Sites
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
TR7	Car Parking-Standards

## **7.0 Considerations**

7.1 The site is located within the St Elizabeth's Centre Major Developed Site as defined in the Local Plan. However, the majority of the proposed development falls outside the Major Developed Site boundaries. I therefore consider that the main determining issue in this case is whether special circumstances exist to permit development which would extend outside the boundaries of the Major Developed Site into the Rural Area. An important material consideration for the determination of this current application is the permission granted for a new day centre in 2007.

### Principle

7.2 The Committee report regarding the previous proposal concluded that the building itself, and the incursion into the Rural Area would not have a harmful effect on the visual amenities of the locality. It was noted that the building would be set back some distance into the site from the main vehicular entrance and away from the site's boundaries to the north and north-west which, together with mature hedgerows and trees that would screen the development, would reduce the impact of the development on the surrounding landscape to an acceptable level. From the viewpoints within the complex to the south, the building would be viewed behind the existing complex of buildings, and the development would not appear unduly prominent. These circumstances remain the same for the current application and Officers therefore consider that views of the building from outside the site would remain limited and would be acceptable.

7.3 It was concluded with the previous application that a departure from Policy to allow the development to occur outside of the boundaries of the Major Developed Site was acceptable in that instance as it was considered that the incursion outside the Major Developed Site's boundaries would not have a harmful impact on the Rural Area or lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site. Furthermore, whilst the building itself is

fairly large, it would remain well related to the existing complex of buildings to the south, in terms of scale and diversity, and given the location and surrounding landscape features it would not present a visually prominent feature from outside the centre. The changes made to the current proposal to include a different design, form and small increases to the size and height of the building do not represent a significant change in circumstances to warrant a different decision now being made to the 2007 application. Officers therefore consider that, despite the incursion of the development into the Rural Area, its size, height and design and its siting within close proximity to the existing complex of buildings at the site, would ensure that it would not result in a significantly harmful impact upon the open character of the Rural Area. The benefits of the new facilities proposed within the development would, in officers' opinion, outweigh any harm that would be caused.

#### Design, Form and Height

- 7.4 The current proposal is for a building of similar size and siting to that previously approved at the site. The current application proposes an additional 60sqm of floor space compared to the previous proposal and the highest part of the roof of the building has increased by 1 metre. However, the most significant changes are to the building's design and form. The approved plans show a more fragmented building form and design compared to the current proposal with various sloping roofs and large glazed areas. The current application proposes a more simplistic design.
- 7.5 The changes made to the design, form and height of the building are relatively modest and Officers do not consider these changes to be of any harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area to justify the refusal of the current application. Furthermore, the proposed building would represent an improvement in terms of its design and appearance compared to the existing day care centre and associated portacabins that are intended to be demolished. The St Elizabeth's Centre remains visually separate from the remainder of Perry Green, comprising of a distinct site where the repetition of local historic vernacular is not considered, by Officers, to be necessary or indeed appropriate. The contemporary design of the building would be in keeping with other recent developments on the site and having regard to its siting forming an extension of an existing Major Developed Site which comprises a mix of building styles, it is considered that the proposal would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
- 7.6 Policy GBC4 states that any redevelopment at a Major Developed Site such as the St Elizabeth's Centre should not exceed the height of existing complex buildings. The 2 storey part of the building would undoubtedly be

higher than the 1 and 1 ½ storey surrounding buildings. However, as this part of the building would accommodate a sports hall there is clearly a functional need for a 2 storey building in order to allow for sports such as indoor ball games to occur within the building. Officers consider that this functional need together with the distance of approximately 30 metres that the building would be set back from the existing 1-1 ½ storey buildings at the site justifies the height of the building in this instance.

### **Access and Parking**

- 7.7 County Highways have confirmed that they have no objection to the site access; parking and turning facilities and now that the previously approved café and hydrotherapy pool is removed from the proposal, traffic generation is likely to be reduced compared to the previously approved scheme. It is not anticipated that any increases in traffic would occur as a result of the development as the new facilities would accommodate young adults already living at the centre and there is no plan to increase this number.
- 7.8 The number of parking spaces proposed at the site remains the same as the approved application and Officers maintain that this is an acceptable provision in this case.

### **Other Matters**

- 7.9 The nearest neighbouring residential properties are located some 85 metres from the proposed development. This distance, together with the boundary screening, would be sufficient to ensure that the impact that the development would have upon the amenities of these neighbours would not be unacceptable.
- 7.10 The condition recommended by Environmental Health which restricts the hours of construction works at the site is considered to be reasonable and necessary in this case to protect existing residents at the St Elizabeth's Centre. However, the remaining conditions that have been recommended in relation to dust and asbestos are not considered to meet the tests of Circular 05/2005 and are not therefore reasonable in this case.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The St. Elizabeth's Centre is designated as a 'Major Developed Site' within the Local Plan, wherein redevelopment proposals are acceptable in principle in accordance with Policy GBC4. However, the current proposal would result in development occurring outside of the boundaries of the Major Developed Site and into land designated as Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. Officers consider that the development would not result in a

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significant harmful impact on the open character of the Rural Area, and that the benefits of the new facilities proposed by the development would outweigh any harm that would be caused. Therefore, a departure from Policy is considered justified in this instance.

- 8.2 Notwithstanding the changes that have been made to the design, form and height of the proposed building, compared to the similar development that was approved in 2007, Officers do not consider there to be any sufficient changes in circumstances or policy to justify a refusal of the current application.
- 8.3 Having regard to the above considerations, it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to the conditions at the head of this report.