

5d 3/12/0141/FP – Erection of vehicular and pedestrian gates, railings, fencing and CCTV and lighting columns to existing school and service entrances at St Elizabeth’s School and Home, South End, Perry Green, Much Hadham, SG10 6EW for St Elizabeth’s School and Home

Date of Receipt: 30.01.2012 **Type:** Full – Minor

Parish: MUCH HADHAM

Ward: MUCH HADHAM

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Approved Plans (2E10) (BA/ 3012.06.200 B, BA/ 3012.06.201, BA/ 3012.06.202, BA/ 3012.06.203 A, BA/ 3012.06.204, BA/ 3012.06.205, BA/ 3012.06.206)
3. Materials as on Plan (2E42)

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 ‘saved’ policies GBC3 and ENV1) and the National Planning Policy Framework. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies, the requirements for the development and the limited harm to the character and appearance of the rural area is that permission should be granted.

_____ (014112FP.FM)

1.0 Background:

- 1.1 St Elizabeth’s Centre is located to the south of Perry Green within a rural setting and is shown on the attached OS extract. 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. St Elizabeth’s Centre is classified as a Major Development Site within the Local Plan wherein limited infill development is acceptable. The proposed development would be sited to the west of and outside of this

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Major Development Site boundary and therefore within the Rural Area beyond the Metropolitan Green Belt.

- 1.2 The proposal involves the erection of vehicular and pedestrian gates, railings and fencing and CCTV and lighting columns to the existing school and service entrances. The service entrance is sited 75metres north of the existing school entrance, with the built development of the centre sited to the east of these entrances.

2.0 Site History:

- 2.1 A significant amount of development has taken place at the Centre over recent years in accordance with an overall strategic master plan for the site undertaken by Ingleton Wood, the site's planning consultants. This includes the erection of new day care, community and sports centre within LPA reference 3/10/0828/P.

3.0 Consultation Responses:

- 3.1 Herts Biological Records Centre has commented that there are no ecological constraints associated with this application.
- 3.2 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission and comment that the proposal is unlikely to lead to an intensification of vehicle movements and is acceptable in a highways context.

4.0 Parish Council Representations:

- 4.1 Much Hadham Parish Council raise no objection to the proposal.

5.0 Other Representations:

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by way of discretionary site notice and neighbour notification.
- 5.2 Two letters have been received from neighbouring residents. The concerns raised are summarised as follows:
 - The height and type of gates and fences do not suit the openness of the area, are unsympathetic and would be industrial in appearance.
 - The lights when lit will cause pollution and impact upon neighbour amenity.

6.0 Policy:

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

GBC3 Development within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt
ENV1 Design and Environmental Quality

7.0 Considerations:

7.1 The determining issues in relation to this application are as follows:

- The principle of development within the Rural Area;
- The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Rural Area and the street scene;
- The impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers.

Principle of Development

7.2 The site lies within the Rural Area beyond the Metropolitan Green Belt wherein inappropriate development will not be permitted. Policy GBC3 lists developments which are classed as appropriate; however this does not include the erection of fences and gates within the grounds of a school. It should therefore be considered whether there are material considerations in this case that outweigh the policy presumption against development in the Rural Area.

7.3 In this case, it is important to note the planning statement that has been submitted with this application. This outlines that, following an Ofsted inspection, the Centre was advised to improve its security at the main school entrance and also at the service entrance. These new secure vehicle and pedestrian gates would replace the existing 1.6 metre high vehicle and pedestrian gates at the main school entrance which are bounded by 1.8metre high brick piers. It is noted that the service entrance has no existing vehicle or pedestrian entrance gates. Behind the proposed gates at both entrances, a CCTV camera would be erected on a 3.6metre high column and a total of five lighting columns also erected. The vehicle and pedestrian gates, together with the CCTV cameras and lighting columns will ensure that the school is secure. Officers consider that this is a material consideration of significant weight in this case.

7.4 Turning firstly to the impact of the development proposed at the main school entrance on the character, appearance and the openness of the Rural Area, the replacement vehicle and pedestrian gates would reach a height of 1.8 metres, with piers reaching 1.9 metres high. On either side

of the proposed replacement vehicular gates, on the existing dwarf brick walls would be a section of metal fencing which would replace the existing trellis and would reach a total height of 1.8 metres. Between the brick piers and the entrance gates which are proposed to be set back some 6.1 metres from their existing position, a 1.8 metre high metal fence would be erected with a length of 6.1 metres. Taking into account that the proposed pedestrian and vehicular gates would only be a maximum of 0.3 metres greater in height than the existing gates and brick piers; that they would be similar in appearance and materials of construction to the existing gates with open railings, and that the proposed vehicular gates would be set back a further 6.1 metres from the existing vehicular gates, Officers consider that the proposed entrance gates and fencing would therefore still retain a low-key visual appearance and would be of a size, siting and design that would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the street scene or the openness and rural character of the surrounding area.

- 7.5 The proposed vehicle and pedestrian gates located at the service entrance would also reach a height of 1.8 metres, with piers reaching 1.9 metres high. The proposed vehicular gates to the service entrance would consist of 2 separately operating entrance gates – one for vehicles entering the site and a second set for those exiting the site. It is noted that the proposed gates would extend 10 metres across the existing access which currently is open and would require widening the kerbs and reducing the grass amenity strip at either side of the entrance. However, taking into account that the proposed vehicle and pedestrian gates would be set back from the highway by between 8.2 and 9.5 metres; that the gates would be set against a background of fairly large buildings, which are commercial in their appearance, and that the proposed gates have been designed with open bars and detailing to reflect the design and appearance of those at the main school entrance, it is considered that the proposed gates would be of a size, scale, siting, design and materials of construction that would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the street scene and would retain the open character of the locality.
- 7.6 This application also proposes to erect a CCTV column at each of the entrances; three lighting columns at the service entrance and a further two lighting columns at the main school entrance (which currently only has one). These proposed columns would reach between 3.6 and 3.9 metres in height and as such would be visible from within the street scene. However, having regard to the modest 0.4 square metre footprint of the columns, and that at the main school entrance, they would be set back from the highway by between 14 and 26 metres and between 9.5 and 17.5 metres at the service entrance, it is considered that the

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number, the modest size and the siting and design of the lighting and CCTV columns would not result in a detrimental visual impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and would not intrude into the openness of the Rural Area.

The impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers

- 7.7 Turning to the impact upon neighbour amenity, the nearest neighbouring property to the service entrance is sited on the other side of the highway to St Elizabeth's Centre and some 50 metres from this entrance. The proposed lighting columns at this entrance would be set back 9.5 metres into the site. In respect of the gates and CCTV and lighting columns proposed at the main school entrance, the nearest neighbouring property is sited at least 70 metres from this entrance and is also located on the other side of the highway. The proposed lighting columns at this entrance would be set 14 metres into the site. Having regard to the distance the proposed development would retain from the nearest neighbouring dwellings, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any impact on the occupiers of such properties.

8.0 Conclusion:

- 8.1 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to the openness or rural character of the surrounding area or the amenities of any neighbouring properties.
- 8.2 It is therefore considered that there are circumstances in this case to allow permission to be granted contrary to Policy GBC3 of the East Herts Local Plan. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions which are outlined at the head of the report.