

**5h 3/10/1209/FP – Erection of fencing and gates to front and flank boundaries at High Wych JMI Primary School, High Wych Road, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 0JB for High Wych School**

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**Date of Receipt:** 07.07.2010      **Type:** Full – Minor

**Parish:** HIGH WYCH

**Ward:** MUCH HADHAM

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Samples of Materials (2E12) - amended

**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 East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular ‘saved’ policies GBC1, ENV1, BH6 and PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

\_\_\_\_\_ (120910FP.FM)

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 High Wych Primary School is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, to the south of the Category II Village of High Wych as shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The main school building is a flat roofed, yellow brick building which is set some 50metres back from the highway and is well screened from the road by mature vegetation. Sited to the front of the school building are various outbuildings, two of which appear to be the original school buildings and are Grade II Listed. To the north east of the site is St James Church which is Grade II\* Listed. The main school building is sited outside of the High Wych Conservation Area, but part of its curtilage, to the north and east of the school, is sited within the Conservation Area.

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1.3 The proposal involves the erection of fencing and gates to several areas within the school grounds:

- A 1.8 metre high close boarded fence, 13metres in length to be attached to the front corner of the School House and attached to the gates at the front of the site, perpendicular to the highway;
- 1.8 metre high metal mesh anti-climb security fencing, to be sited on the boundary to the north of the school, shared with St James Church and sited adjacent to the School House;
- 2metre high close boarded fencing to replace existing fencing, 2metre high metal mesh fencing to replace the existing chain link fence and timber fencing, sited on top of the curtilage listed wall, west of the School House, to the rear of The Bungalow and in front of the main school building;
- 1.8metre high black gates to replace the existing gates at the front of the site, 4.3metres in width.

## **2.0 Site History**

2.1 Planning permission was refused at the site for the erection of 2metre high fencing and gates to the front and flank boundaries of the school, LPA reference 3/09/1931/FP.

## **3.0 Consultation Responses**

3.1 The Council's Conservation Officer has commented that the proposed gates and metal and timber fencing would now be of a size, siting and design that would be appropriate for the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would now preserve the historic setting of the adjacent listed buildings. Conservation have further commented that there is still no objection to the proposed 2metre high close boarded fence that would be sited to the rear of The Bungalow. Approval is therefore recommended subject to conditions.

3.2 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission and comment that the proposal will not have an impact upon highway safety or capacity.

## **4.0 Parish Council Representations**

4.1 High Wych Parish Council raise 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:-

GBC1	Development within the Greenbelt
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
BH6	New Developments in Conservation Areas

In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment forms a material consideration in the determination of this application.

## **7.0 Considerations**

- 7.1 The determining issues in relation to these applications are as follows:
- The principle of development within the Metropolitan Green Belt;
  - The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the High Wych Primary school existing listed building and the impact upon its setting;
  - The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
  - The impact of the proposal on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings and the curtilage listed wall;
  - The impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers.

### **Principle of Development**

- 7.2 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 the erection of fences and gates 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.
- 7.3 In this case, it is important to note the planning statement that has been submitted with this application. This outlines that after an incident at High Wych JMI Primary School in 2007, the school is now required by

OFSTED, and has been advised by Hertfordshire County Council, to erect new security fencing along several boundaries within the site. This new secure fencing would replace the existing 1metre high fencing that is located within the site and also the front and flank boundaries, much of which is in a poor state of repair. The replacement fencing and gates will ensure that the school is secure. Officers consider that this is a very special circumstance that may outweigh Green Belt policy.

- 7.4 Turning to the impact of the proposal on the character, appearance and the openness of the Green Belt, Officers note that the proposed metal mesh fencing and gates would reach 1.8metres in height and the proposed fence would extend some 75metres in length. However, taking into account that the fence has been reduced in height from that previously proposed within LPA reference 3/09/1931/FP and, taking into consideration that the mature landscaping that is currently sited along the north east site boundary would be retained, Officers consider that the resultant fencing and entrance gates would therefore still retain a low-key visual appearance and would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the existing school building; the character and appearance of the street scene; or the openness and rural character of the surrounding area.
- 7.5 With regards to the impact of the proposed 1.8metre high green metal mesh fencing, sited along the boundary shared with St James Church and the School House buildings, on the setting of the Listed Buildings, Officers consider that the reduction in its height, together with the retention of the existing landscaping, would now result in a proposal that would respect the character and appearance of the High Wych Conservation Area. It would also preserve the historic relationship and the setting of the Grade II Listed School House buildings and St James Church. It is therefore considered that the proposed fencing along the northern boundary is now appropriate, and in keeping with the established character and appearance of the locality and the setting of the adjacent Listed Buildings. Furthermore, it is Officer opinion that the proposed fencing would improve the character and appearance of the locality because the existing open, chain link fencing along this boundary is in a poor state of repair.
- 7.6 This application also proposes to replace the existing black, 1.1metre high double gates at the front of the site with gates that would be 1.8metres high. These would be in the same location as the existing double entrance gates and would retain 5metres to the highway. The gates have been designed with open bars and a finial spike detail to reflect the design and appearance of the listed wall at the front of the site. In accordance with the comments from the Conservation Officer

and, taking into account that the proposed front gates have been reduced in height from those previously proposed within LPA ref. 3/09/1931/FP; that they are now designed to replicate the design of the Grade II Listed wall at the front of the site; and that the gates will now be constructed in appropriate materials, it is considered that the proposed gates would now be of a size, scale, siting, design and materials of construction that would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the High Wych Conservation Area, and would preserve the setting of the Grade II Listed School House and the wall at the front of the site.

- 7.7 The proposal also involves the construction of a 1.8metre high close boarded fence, approximately 13metres in length that would be attached at the front corner of the School House and would run to the proposed gates at the entrance to the site. Previously it was proposed to attach the other end of this fence to the Grade II Listed wall to the front of the site. However, following concerns that this would have a detrimental impact upon the historic setting of the Grade II Listed wall, the proposed fence would now be attached to the gates at the front of the site and would therefore now retain a set back of 5metres from the highway. The proposed fence has also been reduced in height from 2metres to 1.8metres. It is noted that whilst the proposed fence would still be a close boarded timber fence, the posts would no longer be concrete, but would also be timber. In accordance with the comments from the Conservation Officer, it is considered that the proposed fence would now be of size, siting, design and materials of construction that would be appropriate for the character and appearance of the High Wych Conservation Area and the locality and would preserve the setting of the adjacent Grade II and II\* Listed Buildings. The proposal would thereby comply with Policies ENV1, BH6 and PPS5 and would overcome the previous reason for refusal.
- 7.8 The proposal also involves the construction of a 2metre high close boarded fence, to be sited in front of the main school building and to the rear of the School House. This would replace an existing 2metre high close boarded fence. Attached to the proposed fence between the School House and the main school building would also be a 2metre high mesh and wire security fence and single gate (similar to that proposed along the north east boundary of the site). These proposed fences would be sited some 37metres from the highway and would be sited to the rear of The Bungalow, which is well screened by mature landscaping. Officers therefore do not consider that the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the High Wych Conservation Area and consider that it would preserve the character and appearance of the main school building. Whilst the proposed boundary treatment would be sited within 3metres of the School House, a Grade II

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Listed Building, I note that the Conservation Officer does not raise any concerns with these elements of the proposal. Therefore it is considered that due to the siting and design of the proposal, the fencing would not have a harmful impact upon the historic setting of the adjacent Listed Building.

- 7.9 The previous application also proposed to erect a timber fence on top of the brick wall located to the west of the School House and to the front of the main school building. Concerns were raised that the resultant 2metre height of the wall and the fence, together with the siting of the fence on top of the wall would have had a detrimental impact upon the historic fabric of the wall and therefore would not have preserved its historic setting. The proposed fence would therefore have been contrary to PPS5. This application now proposes to construct a 1.8metre high timber boarded fence in front of the existing wall, with timber boarding and timber posts. The proposed fence has also been re-sited and therefore would no longer be attached to this curtilage listed wall. Taking into account that the proposed fence would no longer be attached to this wall, and would have a similar appearance to the existing fence sited behind the wall, it is considered that it would now preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and also the setting of this curtilage listed wall. It is therefore considered that the second reason for refusal within LPA ref. 3/09/1931/FP has been sufficiently overcome.

#### The impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers

- 7.10 Turning to the impact upon neighbour amenity, the proposed fences and gates are sited some distance from nearby residential properties and therefore the proposal would not 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; the character and appearance of the existing school building; the amenities of any neighbouring properties or the character, appearance and setting of the adjacent Grade II and Grade II\* listed buildings.

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- 8.2 It is therefore considered that there are circumstances in this case to allow permission to be granted contrary to Policy GBC1 of the East Herts Local Plan. It is considered that the proposal sufficiently addresses and overcomes the previous reasons for refusal. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions which are outlined at the head of the report.