

5h 3/11/0722/FP – Replacement modern modular classroom unit at Sacred Heart RC JMI School, Broadmeads, Ware, SG12 9HY for The Board of Governors, Sacred Heart RC JMI School.

Date of Receipt: 26.04.2011

Type: Full - Minor

Parish: WARE

Ward: WARE - CHADWELL

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Temporary permission - building (1T08 – 3 years)
2. Approved plans (2E10 - BA/4025.213/200, BA/4025.213/201, BA/4025.213/202)
3. Materials as on plan (2E42)
4. The development hereby permitted shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved flood risk assessment (Barker Associates, April 2011 BA/4025.213/001CC), and finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 34.3m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to the development and future occupiers in accordance with policy ENV19 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

Directives

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. Groundwater protection zone (28GP)

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, TR2, TR7, ENV1, ENV14, ENV19, ENV20 and LRC1, PPS1, PPG2 and PPS25. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies, and other material considerations, is that permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The site comprises an established primary school located at the end of Broadmeads quite close to the centre of Ware but within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site is bordered to the east by the Broadmeads residential development, the River Lea to the north, the railway line to the south, and Kings Meads nature reserve to the west. The site is surrounded by mature trees, and the playing fields are designated as open space under policy LRC1. The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The existing main building is a single storey flat roof construction of 1970s appearance with a playground located to the west and playing fields beyond. There are existing modular classrooms located to the west of the main building, including one recently approved by Committee in June 2010 under reference 3/10/0792/FP. It is now proposed to replace one of the older modular classroom buildings, which is in a poor state of repair.
- 1.3 The application has been referred to Committee for determination as the proposed modular classroom constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

2.0 Site History

3/10/0792/FP	Installation of free standing modular classroom unit.	Approved with Conditions 30-Jun-2010
3/07/0482/FP	Car park and cloakroom and security fencing improvements.	Approved with Conditions 01-May-2007
3/05/1315/FP	Covered learning area for reception class.	Approved with Conditions 15-Aug-2005
3/05/1220/FN	Renewal of permission for relocatable classrooms.	Approved with Conditions 08-Aug-2005
3/01/1055/FP	New playground extension.	Approved with Conditions 01-Aug-2001
3/99/0627/FP	New classroom extension.	Approved with Conditions 16-Jun-1999

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The Environment Agency advise that the development will only be acceptable subject to a condition that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved flood risk assessment, and that the finished floor levels are set no lower than 34.3m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 3.2 Sport England raise no objection subject to a condition that the building be removed at the end of the temporary period and the land being reinstated to playing field use. They comment that the new classroom would be slightly larger and would encroach onto the playing field; however the classroom would be temporary, the encroachment would be relatively small, no existing summer or winter playing pitches would appear to be affected. Further, the extended footprint would affect an area of the playing field that is partially enclosed by the modular buildings and therefore unlikely to be used as part of a playing pitch, and the siting of the building would not prejudice the marking out of additional pitches or rotation of playing fields.
- 3.3 Veolia Water comment that the sites lies within the Groundwater Source Protection zone of Musley Land Pumping Station.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 At the time of writing this report, no response has been received from Ware Town Council.

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, 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
TR2	Access to New Developments
TR7	Car Parking – Standards
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV14	Local Sites

ENV19 Development in Areas Liable to Flood
ENV20 Groundwater Protection
LRC1 Sport and Recreation Facilities

- 6.2 In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 1, (Delivering Sustainable Development), Planning Policy Guidance 2 (Green Belts), and Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) 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 building is proposed as a replacement to an existing run-down modular classroom building. The new building will have a similar footprint but will measure approximately 5m longer in length. It will provide two replacement classrooms, along with an entrance lobby and male and female toilet facilities. The classrooms must each measure at least 60m² in floorspace in order to comply with Government guidelines set out in the Department of Children, Schools and Families Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects. The school currently has insufficient teaching space for the number of pupils and the larger replacement building would help bring the school up to standard.
- 7.3 Although the replacement unit is slightly larger than that existing, it will have limited impact on the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt. The building will be positioned such that it will not extend beyond the existing buildings. However, it is noted that the existing modular building was only granted temporary planning consents, the latest of which expired in August 2008, and given that this new building is larger, it is considered reasonable and necessary to restrict the consent to a temporary period of three years. This is due to the scale and design of the building, its temporary nature, and the location of the site in the Green Belt. Therefore, Officers consider that very special circumstances exist to outweigh Green Belt policy in this case, subject to a temporary consent for the building.

Scale and Design

- 7.4 The modular classroom is proposed to measure 22m in length by 8m in width with a flat roof to a height of 3.5m to match existing. The building is proposed to be finished in cedar cladding with a flat felt roof to match the recently constructed adjacent modular building. Overall this scale and design is considered to be acceptable with the use of cedar cladding improving the appearance of the building compared to the existing run-down unit.

Open Space

- 7.5 The proposed development will result in the loss of approximately 39.5m² of designated recreation space, which is protected under policy LRC1. Sport England have raised no objection to the application subject to a condition requiring the land to be reinstated as playing fields following its removal. However, they go on to comment that this proposal will not affect existing playing pitches, and given that the extended footprint of the building affects an area partially enclosed by other buildings, would be unlikely to be used for forming a playing pitch. Further it would not prejudice the potential for marking out of additional pitches, nor the rotation of playing pitches from season to season. Officers therefore see no justification for imposing such a condition, having regard to the tests for planning conditions set out in Circular 11/95.

Flood Risk

- 7.6 The site lies within Floodzone 2 and a full Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted. The Environment Agency have no objection to the proposed development subject to a condition to restrict finished floor levels. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policy ENV19 of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

- 7.7 No harm will arise to neighbouring amenity given the distance to neighbouring properties.
- 7.8 Further, no harm would be expected to the Kings Mead Wildlife Site due to its distance over 90m to the west.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, the development cannot be considered as appropriate development in the Green Belt; however Officers consider that very special circumstances exist to outweigh this policy objection. The building will replace an existing run-down unit, and although it will be slightly larger, this

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is necessary in order to meet current Government guidelines for appropriate teaching space. The replacement unit will improve standards at the school, and is considered to be acceptable in scale and design with limited wider impact on the Green Belt. However, having regard to the temporary restriction on the existing building, its larger size, and the location of the site in the Green Belt, it is considered reasonable and necessary to restrict the permission to a temporary period of three years.

- 8.2 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.