

5c 3/11/0599/FP – Erection of a 2.4metre high transverse climbing wall and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) following the removal of the surface mounted swimming pool at High Wych JMI Primary School, High Wych Road, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 0JB for High Wych School

Receipt: 17.05.2011 **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. Approved Plans (2E10) – PP-01445449; FM1; FM2; 1001

Directives:

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. Ground Water Protection Zone (28GP1)

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 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.

_____ (059911FP.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

3/11/0599/FP

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.

- 1.3 The proposal involves the erection of a transverse climbing wall and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) following the removal of the existing surface mounted swimming pool which is sited in the north western corner of the school site. The existing swimming pool is located towards the rear of the site and has not been in use for several years. As such, the swimming pool and the immediate area around it are in a poor state of repair. The existing swimming pool area is bounded by an existing 2metre high close boarded fencing with wire meshing and mature landscaping.

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.
- 2.2 Following the refusal of the aforementioned application, planning permission was granted for the erection of 2metre high fencing and gates to the front and flank boundaries of the school, LPA reference 3/10/1209/FP.

3.0 Consultation Responses:

- 3.1 The Council's Conservation Officer has commented that the proposed climbing wall and MUGA equipment would not have any impact upon the architectural quality of the Listed Building or its setting, particularly when taking into account the current poor condition of the existing swimming pool area. Approval is therefore recommended.
- 3.2 The Council's Landscape Officer has recommended approval of the application and has commented that the proposed development would have no adverse impact upon significant trees.
- 3.3 Veolia Water comment that the site is located within the groundwater Source Protection Zone of Sawbridgeworth Pumping Station. Therefore the construction works and operation of the proposed development should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices.

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 Green Belt
- ENV1 – Design and Environmental Quality

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 this application 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 adjacent Conservation Area;
- The impact of the proposal on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings;
- 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 walls and hard surfacing 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 the swimming pool which has not been used for several years has fallen in a state of dilapidation and is no longer economically viable to continue its use as a swimming pool. The proposed MUGA and climbing wall will ensure that this area to the rear of the school site is maintained to a high standard and used on a regular basis. Officers therefore consider that this is a very special circumstance that may outweigh any harm in terms of 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 climbing wall would reach a height of 2.4metres and would extend for a length of 14metres and would involve laying tarmac across an area of 280m² for the Multi Use Games Area. However, taking into account that the proposed wall and tarmaced area would be sited behind an existing fence with wire meshing that borders all four sides of the existing swimming pool which reaches a height of 2metres, and also the boundary landscaping that reaches an approximate height of 3metres, Officers consider that the resultant climbing wall and MUGA 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 It is also important to consider the impact of the proposal on the setting of the Listed School Building, St James' Church and the High Wych Conservation Area. Taking into account that the proposed development would retain over 30metres to both of these Listed Buildings and taking into account the recommendation of approval from the Conservation Officer, it is considered that the proposal would respect the character and appearance of the adjacent High Wych Conservation Area and would 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 climbing wall and Multi Use Games Area would be 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 use for this part of the school would improve the character and appearance of the locality because the existing, unused swimming pool and immediate surrounding area are in a poor state of repair.

The impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers

7.6 Turning to the impact upon neighbour amenity, the proposed climbing wall and Multi Use Games Area 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.

8.2 It is therefore considered that there are very special circumstances in this case to allow permission to be granted contrary to Policy GBC1 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.