

**REPORT TO THE EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Report No. 2

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	22/08/13
<b>Application Number</b>	13/00707/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Rushall C of E Aided School Pewsey Road Rushall SN9 6EN
<b>Proposal</b>	Provision of new single mobile classroom with cloaks and toilet accommodation.
<b>Applicant</b>	Wiltshire Council Department of Resources Strategic Property Services
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	RUSHALL
<b>Grid Ref</b>	412437 156070
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Peter Horton

**Reason for the application being considered by Committee**

The application has been submitted by Wiltshire Council, but has attracted local objections raising planning issues. It therefore stands to be determined by committee.

**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the recommendation that the proposed mobile classroom be given a 5 year temporary planning permission.

**2. Report Summary**

The main issues to consider are whether the design of the mobile classroom is acceptable, whether it would have an adverse visual impact within the AONB, whether it would be harmful to neighbour amenity and whether additional traffic generated by higher pupil numbers would have an adverse impact on highway safety.

**3. Site Description**

Rushall school lies towards the northern end of Rushall, on the eastern and southern side of Pewsey Road on a bend in this road. It is situated between residential properties and adjoins School House, formerly part of the school but now in private ownership.

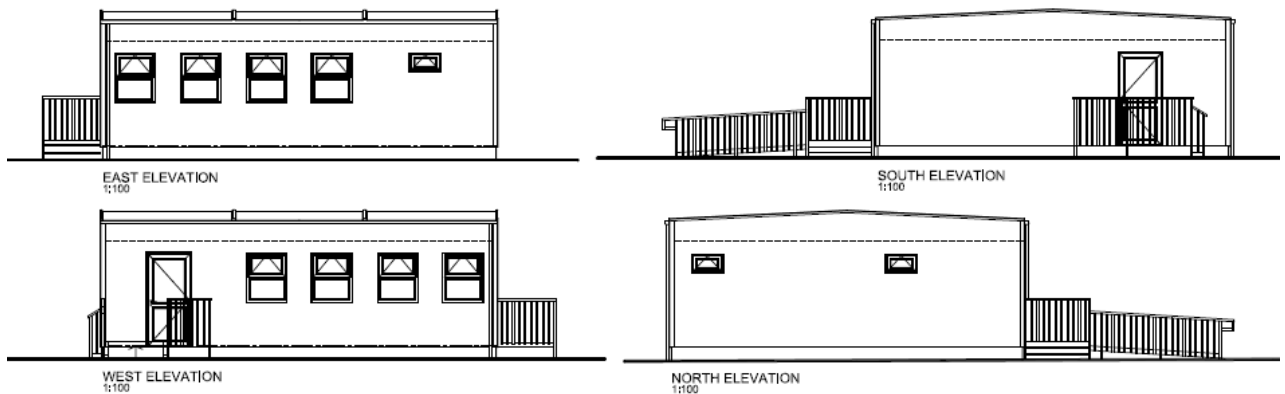
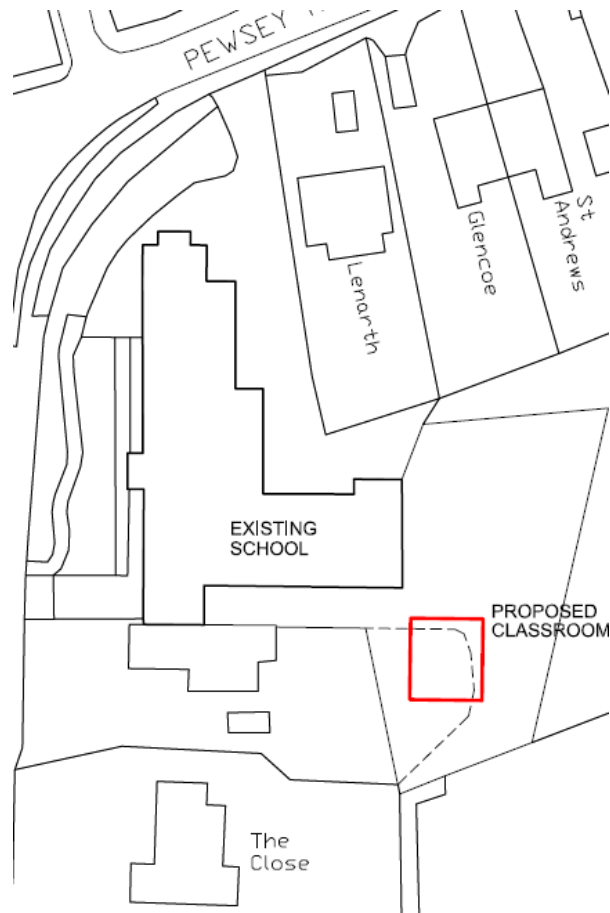
**4. Planning History**

In 2007 planning permission was granted for a 2 storey classroom and nursery extension (ref. K/57182/F).

In 2010 planning permission was granted for a detached pavilion (ref. E/10/0751/FUL).

**5. The Proposal**

A 5 year temporary planning permission is sought for a mobile classroom, to be located on land adjoining the school playground which is currently partially occupied by a greenhouse and a shed. The mobile classroom would be situated beyond the end of the garden of School House, separated from it by an existing fence.



## 6. Planning Policy

Relevant planning policies are policy PD1 of the Kennet Local Plan and central government planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 7. Consultations

Rushall Parish Council: Objects strongly for the following reasons:

- What will happen after the mobile classroom is removed? Will there be an application for a permanent structure? A logical solution would be the reversion of School House to Rushall school (the house is currently up for sale).
- The school is located close to a sharp bend on a busy road. There is a lot of congestion at school drop-off and collection times, with parking in the road and the obstruction of private drives. There is no system of traffic control. There is a substantial risk of accident. The school traffic plan is out of date.

- The proposed development increases the density of buildings in a rural location.
- The proposed materials are inappropriate.
- There will be an adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties, particularly School House, in terms of height and proximity of what is proposed and in terms of noise.
- The proposal will be visible from the footpath which crosses the field to the rear and will be an unwarranted intrusion into open countryside.

Upavon Parish Council: Support Rushall parish council's objection to the planning application on the grounds of overdevelopment and lack of parking within the school. The closed school at Upavon is adequate to accommodate the entire school at Rushall without the difficulties that presently exist with regard to Rushall.

Wiltshire Council Highway Authority: No objection. The site was visited at school close time on 09/07/13 and no undue problems were noticed on the highway. At the time about 20 cars were parked in the village hall car park. It was also noticed that a significant number of pupils travelled by bus and that the parking of the buses did not cause a problem. Furthermore the school is very proactive in the preparation and monitoring of its School Travel Plan and an update is underway to reflect the revised pupil numbers.

Schools by their nature have a high parking demand for two short periods during the day, but this in itself does not constitute a reason for a highway objection. In this case it is necessary to judge whether the increase in pupil numbers is such as to lead to an unacceptable increase in highway safety or risk. There have been no recorded personal injury accidents within 200m of the school during the last ten years.

Whilst appreciating the concerns of the Parish Council and local residents, based on the information supplied and on site observations, it is not considered that an objection on highway grounds would be sustainable.

## **8. Publicity**

Neighbours: Objections have been received from 3 local residents. Their main concerns can be summarised as follows:

- The school site is being overdeveloped and is not big enough to accommodate the proposed numbers of pupils.
- Expansion is unnecessary as other local schools are short of children e.g. Chirton, whilst Upavon school has been closed.
- If expansion is justified, then the obvious solution is to acquire School House, which is up for sale.
- Traffic generated by the school leads to considerable congestion, with dangerous and inconsiderate parking. There is an accident waiting to happen and there is no scope for additional traffic resulting from more pupils.
- The school travel plan is out of date and the revision is unlikely to be in place by September 2013.
- The school has a negative impact against the use of the village hall, whose car park is congested at drop-off and pick-up times. This limits the viability of the village hall for hire.
- Higher pupil numbers will exacerbate the noise levels being generated by the school and reduce the privacy of neighbouring gardens. Noise from the classroom will impact the amenity of the adjacent School House.
- Despite the proposed obscuring of the windows, their opening will harm the amenity of School House.
- Smell from the compost heaps and vent pipe of the septic tank of School House will be detrimental to use of the classroom.

- The classroom will interfere with the septic tank soakaway of School House.
- The design is inappropriate for its surroundings in terms of its design, colour and size.
- The school hall could serve as a classroom. The school could use the village hall instead.
- The school pavilion could be converted/replaced by a classroom.

## **9. Planning Considerations**

Rushall school is the only school in the village and surrounding areas. At present the school operates 4 classes. However school numbers are rising and the school needs to accommodate a fifth classroom. The school is full, and having been designated as outstanding at the last Ofsted, is popular with parents. The Education Authority has to take into account parental preference and the Government policy to expand good and outstanding schools. The two often go hand in hand.

The long term aim is to replace temporary accommodation with a permanent build at all schools where the forecasted pupil numbers justify the accommodation. However long term demand for places is not yet proven and limited capital resources mean that it is not appropriate to provide permanent accommodation at this stage. Hence a 5 year temporary planning permission is sought for a mobile classroom.

The mobile classroom would be located within the school grounds within a small garden area currently occupied by a greenhouse and shed. It would be situated beyond the end of the adjoining property 'School House', from which it would be separated by a boundary fence. It would be 'mexican pink' in colour and would have obscurely glazed windows facing towards School House.

Mobile classroom are not intrinsically attractive structures. However they are a typical and unsurprising feature of school sites and no objection is raised in this instance. Whilst recognising that the site lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB, the mobile classroom would be located in the built up area of the village. It would be situated 170m distant from the footpath that crosses the fields to the rear of the school, and views of it would be filtered by existing large trees. Furthermore, the mobile classroom would be read against the backdrop of existing buildings. The colour 'mexican pink' is not the vivid colour which its name implies. An examination of the colour chart in the manufacturer's brochure (Steni Stoneflex) reveals a muted colour which will not stand out in its context.

Whilst the mobile classroom would be clearly visible to the occupiers of School House, it would not be overbearing on this property or be materially harmful to their living conditions. Furthermore, it is proposed to obscurely glaze the windows on its western elevation which would look towards the property. This can be a requirement of a planning condition.

Whilst increased pupil numbers are likely to increase the noise from children playing in the playground, such noise will not materially harm the amenities of surrounding residents, and only occurs at certain times of the school day. Noise from the use of the classroom will not materially harm the amenity of School House, particularly with the aforementioned condition in place.

Smell emanating from the compost heaps and septic tank vent pipe of School House will not be detrimental to pupils using the classroom.

Schools by their very nature have a high parking demand for two short periods during the day. However the Highway Authority has observed a typical school pick-up time and has concluded that an objection to the proposal on highway grounds is not sustainable.

Furthermore there are no recorded personal injury accidents within 200m of the school during the last 10 years. The school is currently preparing an updated School Travel Plan and this is likely to be in place shortly. This will have the environmental option of school transport at its heart.

Apparently School House is not a viable option as the rooms are too small for the Government BB99 guidelines for a Primary Classroom. The Council would have to spend too much money converting the buildings to be suitable for a modern school. Also there are issues about using the upper floor for education.

It has been commented that the school site is being overdeveloped and is not big enough to accommodate the proposed numbers of pupils. However the size of the site meets the BB99 guidelines for a primary school.

It is unreasonable to expect the school to convert either the school hall or pavilion into a classroom.

## **10. Conclusion**

There are considered to be no planning reasons to withhold planning permission for the proposed mobile classroom. However due to the design and nature of the proposed structure, this should be for a temporary 5 year period only. If there proves to be a longer term need for additional accommodation at the school, then it would be more appropriate to explore options to extend the existing buildings rather than to rely on a mobile classroom.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That a temporary five year planning permission be granted, subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 The mobile classroom hereby permitted shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition on or before the expiry of 5 years from the date of this planning permission, in accordance with a scheme of work submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: This permission is granted solely to meet the needs of the present applicant and because the site is in a location where the permanent retention of a building of temporary construction is considered to be inappropriate.

- 3 The windows in the west elevation of the mobile classroom shall be glazed with obscure glass only prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall be permanently maintained as such in perpetuity.

REASON: In the interests of residential amenity and privacy.

- 4 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1316-01, 1316-02 and 1316-05 received 16/05/13

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.