

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
17th OCTOBER 2007

**TROWBRIDGE: CONSTRUCTION OF A FIVE CLASSROOM EXTENSION,
CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND ANCILLARY WORKS AT TROWBRIDGE PAROCHIAL
CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL, WINDERMERE ROAD, TROWBRIDGE
FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Application No. W/07/09019**

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

The Site

2. The site is located in the north-east of Trowbridge, with vehicular and pedestrian access from Windermere Road and pedestrian access via a link footpath from the rear of the school to The Down. The site is predominantly flat in nature and is in a residential area, with single storey dwellings to the south-east and south-west, and 1½ to 2 storey properties to the north-west and north-east. Adjacent to the properties to the south-east and south-west of the site is a 2 metre high hedge that borders the playing field. Between the properties to the south-west and the main school buildings and proposal site is a mature copse. To the north-west the site's boundary is post and mesh fencing, partially screened by semi-mature vegetation, with the north-east of the site bordered by mature vegetation/post and mesh fencing.
3. A location plan is attached at **Appendix 1** and a site layout plan at **Appendix 2**.

Planning History

4. There is no relevant/recent history for this site.

Proposal

5. Planning permission is sought for the construction of a five classroom extension, a Children's Centre and ancillary works. In addition to five new classrooms, the extension is to provide a kitchen area, a store and reception office. The extension would be part two storey and part single storey to reflect the scale of the neighbouring buildings, and be built on part of the existing playground. The Children's Centre is to provide an office, staff area, a meeting and interview room, a store area, kitchen, toilets and a covered buggy park/vestibule. The Children's Centre would be built on part of the existing playground. The Centre would be single storey, attached to the main school building and would use similar materials to help maintain continuity in appearance.

6. A supporting statement accompanied the planning application and is summarised as follows:

“The 5 classroom extension is requested to ensure sufficient provision is made for the accommodating of infant and nursery age pupils from Margaret Stancomb Nursery and Infant School, which is to be relocated to the site to provide an ‘All Through’ Primary School with Nursery.

The site was identified as a suitable location for a Children’s Centre as the area around the school has been identified as being in the top 30% of disadvantaged areas in the country, and the school is well situated to deliver extended services to the local community. The proposed centre would provide a range of multi-agency services as well as flexible space that would be available to other schools and services in the area.”

Planning Policy

7. The following planning policies are considered relevant to this proposal:
- Policies DP1, RLT1 and T5 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 (WSSP).
 - Policies C31a, C38, CF1, R2 and T10 of the West Wiltshire District Plan (WWDP) (1st Alteration June 2004).

These policies are set out in **Appendix 3**.

Consultations

8. **West Wiltshire District Council** – no objection.
9. **Trowbridge Town Council** – object on the grounds that the proposed car-parking would be insufficient and constricted and the scheme does not allow sufficient access for emergency vehicles to the playing fields.
10. **Local Member, Mrs. G. Hill** – no comments received.
11. **Local Member, Mr. S. Oldrieve** – expresses full support for the proposals.
12. **Sport England** – no objection.
13. **Archaeology Section** – no objection.
14. **Countryside Section** – no objection subject to the imposition of condition providing for trees to be protected during construction and submission of a landscaping scheme.
15. **Local Highway Authority** – no objection, subject to condition requesting that there be an adopted School Travel Plan in place prior to the commencement of development.
16. Copies of the consultation responses are available in the **Members’ Room**.

Publicity

17. The application has been publicised by advertisement in the local press and site notice. A neighbour notification exercise has also been undertaken. Three letters of objection, one of which including a 15 signature petition, have been received. The concerns expressed relate to:
- Noise
 - Litter and
 - Potential congestion
18. Copies of the representations are available in the **Members' Room**.

Planning Considerations

19. This planning application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
20. This planning application seeks permission to construct a five classroom extension, a Children's Centre with associated access and ancillary works at the Trowbridge Parochial Church of England Junior School site.
21. The main issues to be considered with regard to this application are:
- Educational Need
 - Loss of Playing Field
 - Visual Impact
 - Highway Issues
 - Local Amenity

Educational Need

22. The addition of a further five classrooms is to allow for the relocation of pupils from Margaret Stancomb School, so providing an 'all through' Primary School with Nursery on the same site. In addition, due to increased levels of housing development within the catchment area of the school, pupil numbers are expected to increase gradually over the next four years, although only to levels below or equal to those of the previous five years.
23. The area around the Junior School has been identified as being in the top 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. As a result, the location of the school for the proposed Children's Centre would be well situated for the delivery of extended services to the local community. As part of Central Government's 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme', 'Sure Start' Children's Centres are considered necessary to assist in the improvement of outcomes for young children, in areas identified as being disadvantaged.
24. The provision of the two facilities on one site is consistent with Policy CF1 of the WWDP as it would provide enhanced levels of educational and social services to both the school and other members of the public, in a location deemed accessible and within an area of verified need. The proposed merger of the two schools to one primary school, with a nursery and Children's Centre has the support of both schools' Governing Bodies, as well as those from the wider community. It would provide a facility for local pupils that will assist in improving curriculum continuity and raise standards, as well as creating state of the art accommodation that will allow children from the same family to be educated on a single site.

Loss of Playing Field

25. The construction of the five classroom extension and the Children's Centre would result in a loss of playground. To ensure the same provision of hard surface play space at the school, an area at the north of the existing playing field is proposed to be laid to tarmac (the same as the existing play area to be replaced). The proposed play area will have no associated structures, with only the planting of trees for natural shade. Although a percentage of the site's grassed play space will be lost, the area of the existing pitches will not be reduced or lost to uses other than those for recreation. The proposals are not considered contrary to Policy RLT1 of the WSSP or Policy R2 of the WWDP. No objection has been raised by Sport England.

Visual Impact

26. The five classroom extension has been designed following pre-application consultation. The main building has been designed so as not to infringe on the neighbouring single storey dwellings by keeping the roof areas to pyramids and shallow pitch on the third classroom at single storey level, with the sub-ordinate scale of the Children's Centre to ape the design and form of the part of the school it would adjoin.
27. With the distance of the Children's Centre from the rear of neighbouring properties, its proposed scale and massing (to be single storey), and the retention of vegetation on the site's boundary, visual discord for adjacent residents would be minimised. Therefore, it is considered the proposal accords with the objectives of Policy DP1 of the WSSP and Policy C31a of the WWDP.
28. The proposed five classroom extension to the south-east of the site would be approximately 4.5 metres from the site's boundary (and the garage/lean-to of 3 Windermere Road). It is noted that the design of the classroom extension is such that where it would be closest to neighbouring properties, the structure would be single storey, increasing to two storeys at a point 7.5 metres from the boundary. The design would maintain a degree of separation between the school and adjacent buildings, yet respect the scale of the neighbouring properties (single storey bungalow). This would ensure provision of additional teaching space can be made with minimal effect on light loss to those uses adjacent to the site, yet marry well with the scale of the host building. The scale of the proposed Children's Centre would also ensure there would be minimal impact on the host building and not dominate the neighbouring properties. This coupled with the proposed materials for the two (using a neutral break in materials on the extension where block work cannot be matched) should positively reflect the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding area. This would accord with the principles of Policy DP1 of the WSSP and Policy C31a of the WWDP.

Highway Issues

29. There are two access points to the school for pedestrians and one access point for vehicular traffic. Pedestrians and cyclists can access the school via either Windermere Road or the footpath between The Down and the school's rear playground. Vehicular traffic, pedestrians and cyclists can access the school from Windermere Road. Objections received from local residents concern access to the school, and the effect of the proposed intensification of use of the school site. In addition the level of provision for car-parking and the adequacy of internal circulation/emergency vehicle access have been questioned.

30. Local residents are concerned that additional traffic will result along The Down, adjacent to the alley way access and along Windermere Road. The concern relates to safety and parking and the levels of congestion currently experienced at peak times at the school gates, the implications this has for the adjacent residents (in particular those with disabilities and restricted movement), on-street parking and access for emergency vehicles.
31. In terms of traffic generation the current School Travel Plan notes that 67% of pupils currently walk to school, with 33% of pupils arriving at the school gates by private motor vehicle during the morning peak (this equates to approximately 49 pupils). At present approximately 49 pupils arrive by private motor vehicle (PMV) to the school each morning (approximately 39 leave by PMV in the evening), and this is anticipated to rise to approximately 77 pupils arriving by PMV in the morning (approximately 61 leaving by PMV in the evening). This is an increase of 57% (28 pupils). The Local Highway Authority has not raised any concern that this likely increase in traffic at peak times cannot be accommodated. The school has in place an adopted School Travel Plan, which is currently being updated to take account of the merger with the Margaret Stancomb School. This promotes walking to school and reducing use of the private car to deliver and collect pupils. Officers do not consider that the likely increase in pupil numbers is such that planning permission should be refused.
32. The proposed level of parking provision on-site for staff and visitors is in accordance with the guidelines and advice stipulated in the WWDP. The on-site parking provision, together with the existing School Travel Plan (which promotes cycling with an identified area on site for leaving bikes and walking to school) accords with Policy T5 of the WSSP and Policy T10 of the WWDP. It is also noted that those properties that could be most affected by the proposal, and those who have concerns of not being able to park on the street (being numbers 1-10 Windermere Road and 25 Coniston Road (which has vehicular access from Windermere Road)) all have off-street parking provision within their individual property boundaries.
33. The Local Highway Authority has not raised an objection to the proposal as access to the site for emergency vehicles is considered acceptable (minimum width required for access being 3.7 metres kerb to kerb (5.5 metres on Windermere Road) and there being access for vehicles 45 metres or less away from the built footprint of the building).

Local Amenity

34. Objections have been raised concerning the increased levels of litter and noise nuisance to be expected from increased pupil numbers on neighbouring residences, and safety and parking issues that would be exacerbated with increased pupil numbers. It is noted from the approved School Travel Plan that a significant number of the existing pupils walk to school (in particular from the Seymour Estate via The Down). The objection raised to the proposal regarding noise is understood, but officers do not consider that any noise generated by increased numbers of pupils using the alley way would be so great to cause a nuisance such that permission should be refused. It is noted that the school has a right of access along the alley way between the site's boundary and The Down, and that issues relating to litter along this pathway, and the effect this has on amenity, have been raised. However, the alley way is not in the ownership of the school and there are other means to address such problems as the issue of Street Litter Control Notices. In addition, it has been stated that the school has liaised with neighbours directly adjacent to the path and have provided a facility to assist in the cleaning of the area. It is also the school's intention to maintain the cleanliness of the alley through the education of pupils, as this access point reflects on the school itself. It is not considered that the proposals would be contrary to Policy C38 of the WWDP.

Conclusion

35. The application seeks permission for a five classroom extension, a Children's Centre and ancillary uses.
36. The application has been considered and is judged to be in accordance with the Development Plan and other material planning considerations. It is considered that there are no justifiable reasons to refuse the application.

Recommendation

37. That planning permission be granted for the following reasons and subject to the following conditions:

- The proposals are consistent with Development Plan policies and Government initiatives in relation to educational and community facilities and would not cause any significant harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted planning application W/07/09019 and its associated documents, and Drawing Numbers: 1945/15; 1945/16; 1945/17 Rev. B; 1945/18 Rev. B; 1945/20 Rev. A; 1945/21 and 1945/22 Rev. E.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted details and for the avoidance of doubt.

3. No development shall take place until samples of materials to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Development shall be in accordance with approved details.

Reason: To ensure the sustainable management of resources and ensure the use of appropriate materials in the interest of visual amenity.

4. No construction work related to this application shall be carried out at the site except between the following times:

08.00 – 18.00 Monday to Friday
08.00 – 13.00 Saturday

No construction work related to this application shall take place on Sunday or Public Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of local residents, adjacent properties and land users.

6. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a detailed soft landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, and development shall be in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: In the interests of amenity of the local area.

7. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme detailing the measures that shall be taken to protect trees on site for the duration of construction works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Works are to be in accordance with British Standard 5837:2005.

Reason: To ensure the continuity of amenity afforded by existing trees on site.

8. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until details of the construction access and compound have been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority, and development shall be in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure the safety of site users and in the interests of amenity.

Note to Applicant:

- If bats are found during the course of construction, renovation or demolition works at the site, the work should cease and the local office for Natural England should be consulted on how best to proceed.
- Work involving cutting or removal of any hedgerow, trees or shrubs should be undertaken outside the bird breeding season (birds nest generally between March and August inclusive). If this is not possible, a search should be made of any areas of dense vegetation, by a competent ecologist, to check for any active nests prior to the work commencing. If active nests are found, the work will need to be delayed until the nest becomes inactive.
- Construction materials, soil piles or machinery should not be stored within 5 metres of hedges as this may result in damage to the hedge or its root system that may reduce the integrity of the habitat for future use by birds, small mammals and invertebrates.
- Any area to be strimmed and/or used for material storage prior and during construction should have cuttings removed from site to ensure potential opportunities as places of shelter for reptiles are limited. In the unlikely event that slow worms are found, work should cease and Natural England should be consulted as to how best to proceed.

GEORGE BATTEN

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Senior Planning Officer

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Consultation replies and correspondence