

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

11th JUNE 2003

**WESTBURY: PROPOSED NEW COMBINED SPORTS HALL
AND DINING/CATERING BUILDING AT MATRAVERS SCHOOL,
SPRINGFIELD ROAD, FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
(Application No. W.03.0413.CP)**

Purpose of Report

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

The Site

2. The Matravers School is situated on Springfield Road to the south west of Westbury town. The proposal site itself is located to the north of the existing school buildings, outside the main built fabric of Matravers. The development site at present constitutes part of an uneven grassed area on the margin of the playing field, used for casual recreation. It is adjacent to a hard surfaced formal marked play area and incorporates part of the long jump facility; consequently, this would need to be re-oriented. The area is exposed to the north east, while to the north and north west there is a significant mass of mature trees.
3. A site plan is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Planning History

4. In brief, the planning history of the site is as follows:-

<u>W.01.1016.CP</u>	Planning permission was granted in 2001 for a County proposal to site a double mobile classroom with office on the Matravers School site.
<u>W.02.0022.CP</u>	A County proposal to site a further double mobile classroom with office was granted permission in 2002.
<u>W.03.0513.CP</u>	There has recently been a planning application submitted for an extension to and refurbishment of the existing Design and Technology Block within the main fabric of the school site. This application is also on the agenda for determination by the June Regulatory Committee.

Proposals

5. Permission is sought for a new combined Sports Hall, Dining and Catering building adjacent to the school playing fields, north of the main school buildings. The integration of the Sports Hall volume with the ancillary and dining wing, within the context of the school site, has dictated the form and appearance of the proposed building. The design and materials would complement those of the existing new drama block to which the proposed structure would be adjacent.
6. The proposed structure would provide a 594 square metres Sports Hall (Sport England Standard 4-court Hall) with 214 square metres of ancillary accommodation, adjoining kitchen (80 square metres) and dining room (228 square metres). The existing kitchen would be refurbished and converted to a staff room at a later stage. The building is designed so that it could be extended to provide additional dining accommodation and PE storage to the Hall in the future.
7. The Chief Education Officer has submitted the following statement in support of this application:-

Matravers School requires to be expanded to cope with the additional pupils generated by major housing developments in Westbury.

Already the school has more pupils on roll than its net capacity calculated in accordance with the DfES guidelines. Together with existing PE facility, this project would equip the school with sufficient space to deliver the PE curriculum to the anticipated numbers of pupils expected to be on roll in the foreseeable future.

The school is now sufficiently large to support its own Sixth Form which will formally commence on site in September 2003. This will place additional demands on the existing accommodation.

The Project also provides new Dining facilities which would enable the existing Dining area to be converted into a space able to accommodate the increasing numbers of staff.

Forecast pupil numbers are:

September	2002	2003	2004	2005
Number on Roll	881	1,013	1,035	1,090

The proposal is to build a new block comprising the Sports Hall and the new Dining facilities. It would be adjacent to the school playing fields which would simplify the changing arrangements for outdoor PE.

Accordingly planning permission is requested for the above scheme to facilitate the provision of more places for pupils of Secondary school age in the Westbury area.

Planning Policy

8. Policies CF1 and R2 of the West Wiltshire District Plan are considered relevant to this application.
9. Policies CF1 and R2 remain unaltered in the West Wiltshire District Plan First Alteration (Revised Deposit 2000).
10. All relevant planning policies are set out in the attached **Appendix 2**.

Consultations

11. **West Wiltshire District Council** - No objections.
12. **Westbury Town Council** – No objections.
13. **County Countryside Section** – Stated that a planting schedule must be submitted reflecting the need for additional planting around the north eastern corner and eastern boundary of the development.
14. **Sport England** – Stated that they are opposed to the loss of any playing fields unless an exception to the Policy applies. Consequently they requested further information to enable them to comment (expanded upon in the body of the report).
15. **Highways** – No objection.
16. Copies of the consultation replies referred to above are available for inspection in the **Members' Room**.

Publicity

17. The application has been publicised in the local press and by site notices. A neighbour notification exercise was also carried out. Two letters of representation have been received from residents neighbouring the school site. The concerns raised include:
 - (i) Possible reduction in the amount of light into neighbouring properties
 - (ii) Noise emanating from proposed building
 - (iii) Construction period if permission were granted
 - (iv) View of the playing field
 - (v) Overlooked by proposed development
 - (vi) Inadequate proposed landscaping
18. Copies of the representations received will be available in the **Members' Room**.

Planning Considerations

19. This planning application proposes a significant new block comprising a Sports Hall and new Dining facilities. Together with existing facilities, the proposed development would equip Matravers School with sufficient space to deliver the PE curriculum to the forecasted number of pupils. The main issues to be considered with regard to this application are:-
- Loss of playing field
 - Effect of the proposal on neighbouring properties
 - Form and materials

Loss of playing field

20. The proposed building is sited on an unmarked, informal part of the playing field. The site lies within an area safeguarded for recreational use as defined through Policy R2 of the Adopted West Wiltshire District Plan. Consequently the proposal represents a departure from the Development Plan and this Authority will be required to refer the application to the First Secretary of State if it is minded to grant planning permission. The protection afforded to playing fields is further strengthened through Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) which states that local authorities should give very careful consideration to any planning applications involving development on playing fields.
21. Sport England were concerned that the development of minor parts of the site would lead to the incremental loss of the playing field and as such requested further information regarding the size of the existing playing field that is affected by the proposal, the terms of the community use agreement for the proposed Sports Hall and the technical suitability of the building to Sport England's Guidance Notes. Sport England were also concerned that the proposed building may impinge on the safety margin of, and therefore adversely affect, the adjacent playing pitch.
22. Additional information provided by the applicant confirmed that the playing field area lost to the development would total 1,865 square metres. Of this area, a gross area of 814m² is attributable to indoor sport use and changing facilities. Therefore, the net loss of sports-related land is 1,051 square metres. It was also confirmed that there is no community use agreement at present, although the school's current community use provides for non-sport activities such as Guides and Scouts, with some limited community sports use also occurring. With regard to Technical Suitability, the standards adopted in the design of the sports hall and changing facilities reflect Sport England's Design Guidance Note 'Sports Halls: Design'. Confirmation was also given that there is sufficient tolerance in the setting out of the pitches to enable a safety margin of four metres to be maintained. The full Design Statement is attached at **Appendix 3**.
23. On receipt of the above information, Sport England were satisfied that the proposal meets one of the exceptions to their Policy (E.5.) and one which is now incorporated within Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 in that:-

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

24. In light of the additional information, Sport England do not raise an objection to the proposal and consider that there is sufficient benefit from the development so as to justify the loss of playing field.
25. This stance is reflected in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) which states that planning permission should not be allowed for development involving playing fields unless the proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field. This is clearly the case with the proposed development at Matravers School.
26. In light of the guidance given in PPG 17 and the Sport England response, it is considered that the aims and objectives of Policy R2 of the Adopted West Wiltshire District Plan are not compromised by the proposed development.

Effect of the proposal on neighbouring properties

Loss of light

27. The possible reduction in the amount of light into neighbouring properties was raised as a concern by an adjacent property owner. On studying the location of the property it was established that the closest elevation of the building is 80 metres from the edge of the boundary. Due to the distance and quantity of existing mature vegetation, it is considered by Planning Officers that the effect on daylight at the adjacent properties would be negligible.

Noise

28. Noise is another concern that has been raised by an adjacent resident. It is considered that noise reaching the school boundary from plant sound would be negligible. However, levels of noise that would be generated from the use of the building would fluctuate. It must be taken into account that the area is used during break times and games lessons and is therefore a source of non-contained noise at present. It is anticipated that the construction period would be approximately 45 weeks with access to the proposed development being through the school's existing main entrance and car park.

Loss of views

29. With regard to loss of view over the school playing fields, it is generally accepted that there is no private 'right to a view' that the planning system should protect.

Overlooking

30. The plans submitted with the application and the revised drawings do not propose any windows on the east elevation, consequently the objectors property would not be overlooked.

Landscaping

31. An objector stated that the proposed planting did not appear adequate to obscure a building of this size. The proposed planting illustrated on the plans originally submitted was also believed to be unsuitable by the County Countryside Section. Consequently the plans were revised to illustrate a greater massing of vegetation around the larger elevations. In principle, this proposed landscaping would satisfactorily mitigate the visual impact of the proposal. A planting scheme to detail the exact location of the planting and the species proposed can be made subject to a condition attached to any permission granted.

Form and Materials

32. Policy CF1 of the Adopted West Wiltshire District Plan (March 1996) requires that development must have regard to scale, siting and design. The proposed combined Sports Hall and Dining Room has been designed in an L-shape extending around the edges of the existing tennis courts, with a single point of access and shared toilet facilities. The proposed building profile steps up to connect the large volume of the Hall to the smaller-scale ancillary and dining wings. A covered walkway would run along the ancillary accommodation providing a sheltered entrance. The facing bricks would revert to cedarboard cladding above door head height, thus helping reduce the visual impact of the massing of the Sports Hall block and complying with Policy CF1.
33. The existing path connecting to the car park is to be upgraded to a specification that is suitable for vehicular access. In addition, subject to detailed design, the proposal would meet the requirements for access and provision for disabled persons in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. The location of the Sports Hall adjacent to the playing fields, would simplify the changing arrangements for outdoor PE and ensure good pedestrian and vehicular access for school and community use.

Conclusion

34. Sport England considered that the proposed development for an indoor sports facility would provide sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field.
35. When considering the proposal in light of the Planning Guidance and Sport England response, it becomes apparent that the aims and objectives of Policy R2 are not compromised by the proposed development.
36. The proposed design of the building would provide a link between a second development phase and the existing Design and Technology Block, providing a third teaching space.
37. The proposed development should not impact on the existing adjacent mature trees providing the safeguards outlined by the Countryside Section are conditioned and adhered to.

38. There is an educational need to provide a higher standard of accommodation for Design and Technology at the Matravers School site as set out in the Chief Education Officer's supporting statement.
39. In view of the above and the need to provide improved sports facilities at the school, it is considered that the proposal justifies a departure from the Development Plan with no other overriding planning considerations.

Reason for Recommendation

40. To meet the accommodation needs at Matravers School, Westbury.

Recommendation

41. That:-

- (i) The application be referred to the First Secretary of State informing him that the Committee is minded to grant planning permission under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, subject to the conditions set out below.
- (ii) Should the First Secretary of State not wish to call-in the planning application for determination, planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:-
 - 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. Within three months of this permission a scheme of landscaping shall be submitted for the written approval of the County Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in accordance with those approved details in the first available planting season following completion of the development.
 - 4. Trees, shrubs and hedges planted in accordance with the approved scheme shall be maintained and any plants which within five years of planting die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species.

5. All existing trees and shrubs shall be retained, unless shown on the approved drawings as being removed. All trees and shrubs on and immediately adjoining the site shall be protected from damage during the duration of works on the site. This shall be in accordance with the relevant British Standards (BS 5837:1991). In the event that trees become damaged or otherwise defective during such period, the County Planning Authority shall be notified within seven days and a programme of remedial action shall be submitted for approval and thereafter implemented as approved.

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

Consultation replies and correspondence