

**LAVERSTOCK: PROPOSED RETENTION OF A SINGLE MOBILE CLASSROOM
AT ST. EDMUND'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND GIRLS' SCHOOL,
CHURCH ROAD, LAVERSTOCK, SALISBURY
(Application No. S/08/8012)**

Purpose of Report

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

Site

2. The application site is within St. Edmund's Church of England Girls' School on Church Road in the village of Laverstock, north-east of Salisbury city centre. To the west of the site runs the A30 (London Road). To the west and south of the site are residential neighbourhoods, and to the north and east lay open fields which form the lower slopes of Burrough's Hill. The hill and ridge are included in the landscape setting of Salisbury and Wilton.
3. St. Edmund's is one of three schools occupying a shared site, the others being St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Comprehensive (to the north) and Wyvern College, a Voluntary Aided boys non-selective school (to the south). St. Edmund's lies between the two.
4. The single mobile classroom is located in the south-eastern corner of the built fabric of St. Edmund's grounds, adjacent to the playing field and immediately south of other mobile classrooms on the site. A separate application (S/08/8015) has also been made for the retention of a double mobile classroom with toilets located in the rear north-east corner, not far from the application site.
5. Location and site plans are attached at **Appendices 1 and 2.**

Site History

6. The three secondary schools each have their own distinct ethos and have been developed independently from one another over the past 30 years. As the numbers of students attending the schools have increased over time their respective buildings have been extended incrementally in a piecemeal fashion, reflected in the high number of mobile classrooms currently on the site.
7. It has been recognised for several years that a coherent scheme is required to resolve the building issues across all three schools. The schools have been actively collaborating on the joint delivery of curriculum for some time, but accessing the necessary capital to develop an integrated campus has proved difficult.
8. Church of England Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funding was sought by Wyvern College in 2003-04 to design a scheme which combined Wyvern and St. Edmund's schools, but this funding scheme was subsequently ended nationally and the proposal did not progress.

9. In 2005 the possibility of funding via the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF) led the three schools, the two Dioceses and the County Council to form a Working Group to work on a 'Laverstock Renaissance Project'. This involved a series of meetings with the Governors and Head Teachers, visits to similar joint campuses, and preliminary work on a campus arrangement. DfCSF Schools Capital Division agreed to treat the proposal as a single project, making it eligible for funding under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, and it was to result in a single campus on the existing site, divided into separate courts or quadrangles.
10. The educational vision which emerged from the Working Group was for a new set of buildings in which all of the students would have access to all of the facilities via a collective timetable, whilst preserving the unique ethos of each of the three schools. As stated, the difficulty has been accessing a sufficiently large capital sum to deliver the project as a whole, as it does not readily break up into phases which are well-spaced in time and which can be separately funded. The cost of the project was estimated at £35 million and a bid was to be made to the DfCSF 2007 Targeted Capital Fund.
11. In late 2005 the possibility of more immediate funding up to £20 million through the BSF Pathfinder project prompted Wiltshire County Members and Officers to pursue this source and consider alternative sites for the Laverstock campus in the Salisbury area. However, the cost and planning risks associated with the alternative site (near Old Sarum) were considered too great and the funding went to replacing the George Ward School in Melksham.
12. Most recently the Working Group has been investigating funding the proposal as an Academy. An Academy is a publicly funded, independent state school which adheres to many of the academic requirements of maintained schools, such as the National Curriculum and testing, but has more flexibility for innovation in a range of areas. The joint Academy at Laverstock would cater for 1,500 students of compulsory school age and 300 post-16 students, enabling continuity of education from 11-19 to be offered in a single location.
13. The process is still a 'pre-bid' phase, so there is no guarantee that the requisite funding will be secured. However, it is the most likely source of grant funding which will resolve the unsatisfactory accommodation situation at Laverstock, and enable a set of buildings to be designed which complement their location.
14. In the meantime, the education of the students must continue, and predicted numbers at St. Edmund's Girls School indicate that the school will need to maintain the existing class structure for the foreseeable future. It therefore needs to retain all the accommodation currently located on the school site, including the mobile classrooms of which there are now a total of nine.

Proposal

15. Planning permission is being sought for the retention of a single mobile classroom without toilets (WCC 755) for a further period of five years. Planning permission was originally granted on 29 July, 1998 and has been successively re-issued. The current planning permission expired on 24 July, 2008.

Planning History

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

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| <u>S/98/0920</u> | Planning permission granted for the siting of a single mobile classroom (29 th July, 1998) |
| <u>S/00/0770</u> | Planning permission granted for the siting of a double mobile classroom (26 th May, 2000) |
| <u>S/00/2284</u> | Planning permission granted for the retention of two single mobile classrooms (31 st January, 2001) |
| <u>S/02/0061</u> | Planning permission granted for the siting of two double mobile classrooms (18 th February, 2002) |
| <u>S/03/1359</u> | Planning permission granted for the siting of a double mobile classrooms with toilets (1 st August, 2003) |
| <u>S/05/8015</u> | Planning permission granted for the siting of three single mobile classrooms and one double mobile unit plus demolition of existing (3) and double (1) mobile classrooms (9 th February, 2006) |
| <u>S/07/8001</u> | Planning permission granted for the retention of a double mobile classroom without toilets and a double science mobile (9 th February, 2007) |

Planning Policies

17. The following policies are considered relevant to this planning application:

- Policies PS5 and C7 of the Salisbury District Local Plan 2003 (SDLP).

18. These policies are set out in the attached **Appendix 3**.

Consultation

19. **Local Member, Mr. K. Wren** – comments that a complete re-build is long overdue, but acknowledges that there is no alternative at this stage and does not object to the proposal.
20. **Salisbury District Council** – objects to the proposed retention due to the collective unsuitable visual appearance of the mobile classrooms currently on the school site from the countryside and within the school grounds, and the prolonged use of what is supposed to be only temporary accommodation.
21. **Laverstock and Ford Parish Council** – objects in principle as it wishes to see all of the temporary buildings removed from the campus.
22. **Countryside Section** – no objection.
23. **Local Highway Authority** – no objection.
24. Copies of the consultation responses referred to above are available for inspection in the **Members' Room**.

Publicity

25. The application has been advertised in the local press and by site notice. No letters of representation have been received.

Planning Considerations

26. The planning application must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
27. The main issues to be considered with regard to this application are:
 - Provision of educational facilities
 - Impact on the landscape

Provision of educational facilities

28. Policy PS5 of the SDLP broadly states that new educational facilities required by the Local Education Authority (LEA) will be permitted on suitable sites either within or adjoining the settlements. Furthermore it confirms that it is expected these facilities will be of a permanent construction.
29. Wiltshire County Council, in particular the Department for Children and Education (DCE), is responsible for the provision of education in the Salisbury Local Plan area. The DCE's Office of School Buildings and Places has expressed concern about the quality of the building stock on the Laverstock school site and is actively pursuing a proposal which would see the replacement of all temporary buildings at St. Edmund's and the two adjoining schools with new, permanent school accommodation.
30. It is clear that permanent buildings on the Laverstock site would be preferable. However, it is equally clear that achieving this outcome is a complex task on which many different entities must agree and co-operate, particularly the three schools and the respective funding bodies.
31. Given that this proposal seeks the retention of an existing mobile classroom, the suitability of the site for such development has already been accepted. Although it is acknowledged that the expectation expressed in Policy PS5 is for facilities to be of a permanent construction, this falls short of an actual requirement. Permanent accommodation is being pursued, but in the meantime the school needs its temporary buildings to meet the education needs of its current and projected student numbers for the next five years.

Visual impact on adjoining Landscape Setting of Salisbury and Wilton

32. The mobile classroom is located at the edge of playing fields which form part of the landscape setting of Salisbury and Wilton. Policy C7 of the SDLP states that new development will not be permitted within this setting, in order to avoid detriment to the visual quality of the landscape and to enable allocated developments to be assimilated.
33. Salisbury District Council has objected to retaining the building on the grounds that they (collectively) are of unsuitable visual appearance, being obviously temporary structures.

34. Although it is acknowledged that the existing mobile classroom is relatively exposed along the eastern boundary in particular, it is viewed in the context of the permanent school buildings on site. As the proposed development seeks the retention of existing facilities, it is not considered that there would be any additional impact on the visual quality of the landscape.

Conclusion and Reasons for Granting Planning Permission

35. There is an educational need to retain the mobile classroom at St. Edmund's C of E Girls School, whilst funding is being pursued for a permanent solution.
36. It is not considered that the retention of an existing mobile classroom would cause additional impact on the landscape setting of Salisbury and Wilton.
37. The decision to grant planning permission has been taken having regard to Policies PS5 and C7 of the Salisbury District Local Plan 2003 and to all relevant material considerations.

Recommendation

38. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:
1. The development hereby permitted is for a limited period of five years from the date of this permission.
Reason: To secure teaching accommodation for the period requested.
 2. The land upon which the single mobile classroom is sited shall be restored to its former grassed condition within the first available planting season after the units are removed.
Reason: To ensure the reinstatement of the land in the interests of amenity.

GEORGE BATTEN
Director of Environmental Services

Report Author
Tim Furnidge
Planning Officer

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

Consultation replies