

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULATORY – PLANNING COMMITTEE

9 March 2015

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**2 PROPOSED FREESTANDING MODULAR SINGLE CLASSROOM
AND ADDITIONAL HARD SURFACED PLAY AREA, RENISHAW
PRIMARY SCHOOL, HAGUE LANE, RENISHAW
APPLICANT: DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CODE NO: CD4/1214/112**

4.745.20

Introductory Summary A new freestanding classroom is proposed to the front of the main school building on land which is presently part of the childrens playground. This is required to address school overcrowding. To offset the loss of this piece of playground, a new hard surfaced play area is proposed to the rear of the school. The proposed new classroom is a prefabricated modular building with a mono-pitch roof to be finished in cement fibreboard cladding. Other buildings previously added to the original stone built school comprise a mixture of designs and materials.

Concern has been expressed at the design and siting of the new classroom, however, taking into consideration the contemporary designs of much of the school ancillary buildings and the urgent need to deliver additional classroom accommodation at this overcrowded school on a limited budget, it is considered that the proposed classroom and also the proposed new play area meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and development plan policies. Subject to the recommended conditions and mitigation measures, I consider the proposed development to be acceptable.

(1) **Purpose of Report** To enable the Committee to determine the application.

(2) **Information and Analysis** The application proposes the erection of a freestanding modular classroom of mono-pitch design to the front of the school and a hard surfaced play area to be installed on playing field land to the side/rear of the school.

Site and Surroundings

The school is situated on the edge of the village centre and is surrounded by two-storey dwellings of predominantly red brick and slate roof construction.

The main school building is 19th Century and finished in buff sandstone with a double-pitch slate roof. This has been extended previously with red brick constructed buildings. To the rear of the school is a detached red brick sports hall with a part double-pitch and part mono-pitch roof, beyond which is a large sports field. Also to the rear is a foundation nursery finished in stone with mono-pitch roofing. The present school site, as a whole, comprises a mixture of building styles and finishes.

The school site is enclosed by a 2.0m high weldmesh and palisade fence. The main gate to the school is kept open during the school day and provides a right of way to a private dwelling to the side/rear of the school. The school is not a Listed Building and is not within a Conservation Area. There is some existing planting along the frontage adjacent to a low level stone wall.

The Proposal

The proposed development comprises a freestanding, modular single-storey building to the north-west of the main school building on land which is presently children's playground, and a new hard surfaced play area, adjoining the south-east side of the sports hall, on land which is presently part of a sports pitch/ playing field.

The proposed classroom is of prefabricated construction finished in Marley Eternit Rainscreen cladding with a mono-pitch roof. The cladding is proposed to be finished in terracotta and grey colours. The windows and doors are proposed to be finished in light grey aluminium. The dimensions of the proposed building are: 12.1m long x 6.6m wide x 2.7m high.

The new play area will cover 225m² and would represent a substantial increase in hard play area overall, as well as compensating for the loss of existing playground area due to the proposed classroom building. It will provide a new area for outdoor recreation when the remaining playing field would be unavailable, e.g after wet weather.

The submitted plans show a re-orientated football pitch to the south-east, leaving a narrower and slightly longer pitch compared to the existing pitch.

The application includes a Tree Survey Report. An existing mature Damson tree is proposed to be removed in order to install the prefabricated modular classroom. The tree canopy would overhang the proposed building, and the tree roots would extend underneath it. The County Council's Tree Officer has commented that the proposed removal of the Damson tree is acceptable as the submitted Tree Survey Report indicates that it is diseased and recommends a replacement Damson or Hawthorn tree being planted elsewhere along the frontage.

Background Information

The Education Authority has confirmed its support for this capital scheme to add a new classroom for Key Stage 2 pupils and an increased play area at the school. Due to current overcrowding in the school and the insufficient size of the existing classrooms, the school requires additional teaching space.

Consultations

Local Member

Councillors Charles and Ridgway were consulted with a request for any comments by 13 January 2015.

North East Derbyshire District Council

The District Council was consulted with a request for any comments by 13 January 2015. The District Council responded with no objections.

Eckington Parish Council

Eckington Parish Council was consulted with a request for any comments by 13 January 2015.

Sport England

Sport England objects to the siting of the hard surfaced play area on existing playing field land. The objections are summarised as follows:

- The development would result in the loss of usable playing field land that is currently capable of accommodating pitch sports.
- Construction of the play area would limit the size of the residual grass playing field.
- The existing football pitch accords with Football Association under 9/ under 10 mini soccer pitch dimensions (55m x 37m). The proposed reconfigured pitch (which would measure 56m x 30m) would not accord with the recommended dimensions.
- Consider re-providing the hard play area to the north of the staff car park and sports hall or on the south-western section of the playing field where dimensions available to accommodate pitch sports are more constrained.
- The hard play area proposed at present represents only an informal recreation facility and not formal sports provision.

Internal Consultations

The County Council's Tree Officer was consulted and responded. The following comments are summarised as follows:

No objection to the proposed removal of the Damson tree. The submitted tree survey indicates that the tree is diseased and has a low life expectancy.

The Tree Officer recommends a replacement tree, either a Damson or Hawthorn, to be planted elsewhere along the school frontage as part of the proposed development.

Publicity

The planning application has been advertised by two site notices. A copy of the site notice was also hand delivered to the private residence which is to the rear/side of the school and accessed via the school gates.

One letter of representation has been received expressing concern that the design of the proposed new classroom is not in keeping with the original school buildings and the surrounding area, and will remove the views towards the original school that contribute towards the character of the street.

The points raised are considered in the 'Planning Considerations' section below.

Planning Considerations

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The principal policies relevant to this planning application are:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 14: Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 58: Requiring good design.

Paragraph 74: Promoting healthy communities.

Sport England Playing Fields Policy Statement – A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England

Adopted North East Derbyshire District Council Local Plan Policies

GS1: Sustainable Development.

BE1: General Design Principles.

The key planning considerations for this proposed development are:

- Need for the Development.
- Design and Visual Impact.
- Playing Field Impact.

Need for the Development

The additional classroom is needed to address overcrowding issues at the school. There is already a case of two classes of school children sharing the same classroom.

The proposed hard surfaced play area to the rear of the school is needed to offset the loss of existing hard surfaced play area that will be occupied by the proposed new classroom building.

Design and Visual Impact

The school is situated within a residential area. It is not listed or within a Conservation Area. The contemporary design and siting of the proposed modular classroom building has raised concerns from a member of the public.

The concerns relate to the proposed design of the new classroom not being in keeping with the original school building and the surrounding area. Concern is also expressed that the proposed design will remove the views towards the original school that contribute towards the character of the street. However, it is noted that the school has been extended and altered significantly over a period of years and comprises a mixture of architectural styles and materials. The original school building is finished in stone with a double-pitched slate roof. Surrounding buildings comprise mainly late 19th and early to mid-20th century residential dwellings finished in red brick with double-pitched slate or tiled roofs.

The proposed modular classroom building will be partially obscured by an existing low level, stone wall upon which is a steel palisaded fence to a height of approximately 2m. There is also some existing planting to the frontage in addition to the Damson tree proposed to be removed. It is considered, although of a contemporary design, that the proposed new classroom will not detract or cause detriment to the existing street scene or views along Hague Lane.

Although not a material planning consideration, it is noted that a new classroom of a more traditional design, i.e. red brick walls and double-pitched slate or tiled roof, would cost significantly more than the proposed prefabricated unit, and has been a consideration in the proposal put forward for consideration. Notwithstanding this, the proposed contemporary alternative does not look out of place regarding its design and siting, and allows the new classroom to be located adjacent to the main entrance to the school, satisfying an operational requirement.

Policy GS1: Sustainable Development and Policy BE1: General Design Principles of the North East Derbyshire Local Plan are the relevant policies for consideration when assessing the design and appearance of the proposed development.

Policy GS1 seeks to maintain the quality of community life and economic growth, and the development of this important community facility accords with these policy requirements.

Policy BE1 seeks to presume in favour of new development that respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area and provides landscaping appropriate to the setting. The proposed new classroom is a contemporary design which will positively contribute to a school site which presently comprises of a mixture of building styles and materials. It is not considered that the proposed development would cause detriment to the character and appearance of the site or the surrounding area. There is an existing fence, wall and planting to the frontage which will serve to partially screen the new building from the road.

The loss of the tree is unfortunate but it is accepted that it is diseased. The planting of another tree can be controlled by condition. This would further screen and add to an attractive landscape frontage regarding public views of the proposed development.

Playing Field Impact

Sport England is a statutory consultee for development that impacts upon playing field land. It seeks to resist development on playing field land and this is supported in its Planning Policy Statement - A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England. Policy P1 seeks to oppose development leading to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, unless one of the specific circumstances arises. One of these specific circumstances is Policy Exception E5 where the proposed development *'would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field...'*

The proposed hard surfaced play area does, indeed, take up playing field land, however, the aim of the proposal is the same, to provide exercise and recreation space for school children. It is also considered that the hard surface play area would provide a larger surface than that it replaces, which is capable of being used when at times, due to weather conditions, the playing field may not be. It is noted that the current playing field is proposed to be resited so as to accommodate a sports pitch resulting in no net loss in this area being developed and an improved alternative playing surface. As such, the proposal could be regarded as meeting the essential expectations of the Policy, having regard to its exceptions. Sport England, however, has advised to the contrary, and has maintained an objection to the loss of this part of the playing field and its replacement.

The applicant and school have considered alternative locations for the play area and submitted a sequential analysis for different options. However, for operational, amenity and safeguarding reasons, it is considered that the proposed location is preferable and, on balance, acceptable in planning terms. Paragraph 74 of Chapter 8: Promoting healthy communities of the National Planning Policy Framework, states that playing fields should not be built on unless the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity or quality in a suitable

location, or the development is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.

The proposed play area occupies part of an existing sports pitch, however, the play area will itself provide a play and recreation facility. As a result, the reconfigured sports pitch and the play area would, taken overall, provide a sports and recreation facility, for the children which would be at least equivalent in value to that which is already provided through the playing field

Conclusion

The applicant has sought to provide a new classroom to this school to address overcrowding. A prefabricated, modular building is proposed of contemporary design on a site which is surrounded by existing school buildings of a mixture of architectural designs and materials. The new building is proposed to be sited on land presently used as a children's playground. To offset the loss of this play area, it is proposed to provide a new hard surfaced play area to the rear of the school on playing field land. Sport England, as statutory consultee, retains its objection to the partial loss of playing field area. The loss and alternative replacement have been balanced against overall play area provision available, upgraded and the operational requirements of the classroom provided. Overall, it is not considered that the impact on the playing field outweighs the gain in the classroom and new hard surface play area proposed.

Concerns over the design of the proposed new classroom are noted, however, taking into consideration the contemporary designs of much of the school ancillary buildings, and the urgent need to deliver additional classroom accommodation at this overcrowded school on a limited budget, it is considered that the proposed classroom and also the proposed new play area are acceptable.

Subject to the recommended conditions, I consider that the proposal does not conflict with national or local planning policies and it is recommended for approval.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The correct fee of £385 has been received.

(4) **Legal Considerations** This is an application under the terms of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for development which the Authority itself proposes to carry out.

I do not consider that there would be any disproportionate impacts on anyone's human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights as a result of this permission being granted subject to the conditions referred to in the Officer's Recommendation.

- (5) **Environmental and Health Considerations** As indicated in the report.

Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, property and transport considerations.

- (6) **Background Papers** File No. 4.745.20
Application documents received from the Director of Property dated 1 and 17 December 2014, and 18 and 19 February 2015

- (7) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION** That the Committee resolves to **authorise** planning permission to be **granted** in respect of the above application subject to the conditions detailed below, provided that the application, on being referred to the Secretary of State in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, is not called in for his determination.

Conditions

- 1) That the development shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of the decision.

Reason: The condition is imposed in accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2) No development (including the uses, operations and activities associated with the proposals hereby approved) shall be carried out other than in accordance with the details set out in the Application for Planning Permission, the Design and Access Statement and the Tree Survey Report submitted by the Director of Property registered as valid on 18 December 2014, except as may be otherwise required by the conditions attached to this permission. The approved documents shall comprise of the following:

Drawing No. 1300845_LO_05 Tree/ Hedge Protection and Contractors Compound

Drawing No. 1300845_A02 Proposed Block Plan

Drawing No. 1300845_A01 Proposed Location Plan

Drawing No. 1300845_A03 Proposed Plans

Drawing No. 1300845_A04 Proposed Plans and Elevations

Drawing No. 1300845_A05 Proposed Plans Hard Play Area

Reason: To enable the County Planning Authority to monitor the development in the interests of the amenity of the area.

- 3) Notice of the commencement of the development shall be provided to the County Planning Authority seven days prior to the start of works on site.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to enable the County Planning Authority to monitor the development in the interests of the amenity of the area.

- 4) No development or site clearance shall take place until a scheme of landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall include indications of all existing trees (including spread and species) and hedgerows to be retained and set out measures for their protection throughout the course of development. The scheme shall include tree planting species and locations.

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

Footnotes

- 1) This permission, granted under the terms of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, is for the sole benefit of Derbyshire County Council and can only be implemented by that Authority.
- 2) The proposed development lies within a coal mining area. In the circumstances, applicants should take account of any coal mining related hazards to stability in their proposals. Developers must also seek permission from the Coal Authority before undertaking any operations that involve entry into any coal mines or mines of coal, including coal mine shafts and adits and the implementation of site investigations or other works. Property specific summary information on any past, current or proposed surface and underground coal mining activity to affect the development can be obtained from the Coal Authority. The Coal Authority's Property Search Service can be contacted on 0845 762 6848 or at www.groundstability.com.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

Title

CD4/1214/112 - Classroom and New Play Area, Renishaw Primary School, Renishaw

