

Application No: 11/4000C

Location: CLEDFORD INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL, LONG LANE SOUTH,
MIDDLEWICH, CHESHIRE, CW10 0DB

Proposal: Change of Use to Offices for Cheshire East Council Children and Family
Services

Applicant: Cheshire East Council

Expiry Date: 29-Dec-2011

Date Report Prepared: 24th November 2011

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

Principle

Design

Amenity

Highways

REASON FOR REFERRAL

The application has been referred to the Southern Planning Committee as the proposal is a Cheshire East Council scheme with floorspace over 1000sqm.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site relates to the former Cledford Infant and Nursery School, Long Lane South, Middlewich. The school is situated at the junction of Long Lane South / Sutton Lane and adjacent to the main Cledford Primary School. The infant school and junior school was recently amalgamated with associated extensions to form one combined primary school at the site situated along George VI Avenue. As a result of the amalgamation, the former infant school is currently redundant and an alternative use is sought by Cheshire East Council. To the south of the application site are playing fields which have been retained for use by Cledford Primary School and are not impacted upon by the current application. The surrounding land use is predominantly residential.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The application seeks a change of use from a school (D1) to offices (B1) for Cheshire East Council's Children and Family Services i.e. adoption, safeguarding etc. The application also includes additional parking provision within the site and would include a new internal road to

the side of the building and pedestrian entrance / pathway. Minor alterations are proposed to the external elevations of the existing building and would include: (i) replace a door with full height window (ii) general replacement of doors (iii) new entrance doors with screen (iv) 1.8 metre high green weld mesh fencing to southern playing field boundary.

RELEVANT HISTORY

09/2718W CLEDFORD COUNTY JUNIOR SCHOOL, GEORGE VI AVENUE, MIDDLEWICH, CHESHIRE, CW10 0DD EXTENSION TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF CLEDFORD JUNIOR SCHOOL TO ACCOMMODATE THE AMALGAMATION OF CLEDFORD INFANTS AND JUNIOR SCHOOL, TO PROVIDE A SINGLE SITE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND AN ON SITE NURSERY, ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL WORKS, LANDSCAPING AND CAR PARKING (Approved with conditions 18th November 2009).

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy (NW)

Policy DP4 Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure
Policy DP7 Promote Environmental Quality
Policy RT2 Managing Travel Demand

Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005

GR1 (New Development)
GR2 (Design)
GR6 (Amenity and Health)
GR9 (Access, Servicing and Parking Provision)
RC2 (Protected Area of Open Space)

Other Material Considerations

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways:

The Strategic Highways Manager has raised no objection to the application.

VIEWS OF MIDDLEWICH TOWN COUNCIL

No comments received at time of report preparation.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No representations received at time of report preparation.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

As a former school, the application site is designated as an area of protected open space under Local Plan policy RC2 (Protected Areas of Open Space). The policy however, does allow for the redevelopment of built up areas of redundant sites such as school buildings. Furthermore the conversion of existing buildings is also encouraged in Regional Spatial Strategy (NW) policy DP4 (Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure) through the sequential approach. As the site is situated within the Settlement Zone Line there is a presumption on favour of development, provided that it accords with Local Plan policies GR1 (New Development), GR2 (Design), GR6 (Amenity and Health), GR9 (Access, Servicing and Parking Provision) and RC2 (Protected Area of Open Space).

RC2 (Protected Areas of Open Space)

The application site is designated as an area of protected open space under Local Plan policy RC2 (Protected Areas of Open Space) which is commonplace for school sites. The policy does however allow for the redevelopment of built up areas of redundant sites such as school buildings and as such there would be no conflict with this policy.

Highways

The application proposes to increase the amount of parking provision on site to 39 spaces. The Regional Spatial Strategy (NW) policy RT2 Managing Travel Demand provides parking standards for Office development (B1) being 1 space per 35 sqm. Whilst the level of provision proposed is slightly over this standard, the applicant was advised during pre-application discussions (and in consultation with the Highways Authority) to increase the number of spaces due to the level of proposed staff being based at the site and potential for on-street parking. The Strategic Highways Manager considers that there would be sufficient parking to support the proposed use effectively, and has therefore raised no objection to the application. Furthermore it is considered that as the site is situated within the urban settlement there would be a sufficient level of sustainable transport options available. In order to ensure that the proposed parking layout is provided and available for use in association with the proposal this could be conditioned accordingly. Having regard to the above the application would accord with Local Plan policy GR9 (Access, Servicing and Parking Provision).

Design

The proposal includes minor alterations to the external elevations of the building which are acceptable in design terms. The proposed site layout and additional internal access road would maintain amenity grassed areas and hedgerow frontages which would contribute to the overall landscaping of the site. External works are relatively minor and as such it is considered that additional landscaping is not required. The application would accord with Local Plan policies GR1 (New Development) and GR2 (Design).

Amenity

It is not considered that the proposed change of use to Council offices would have any significantly greater impact on neighbouring residential amenity than the building's former use as a school. The proposal would comply with Local Plan policy GR6 (Amenity and Health).

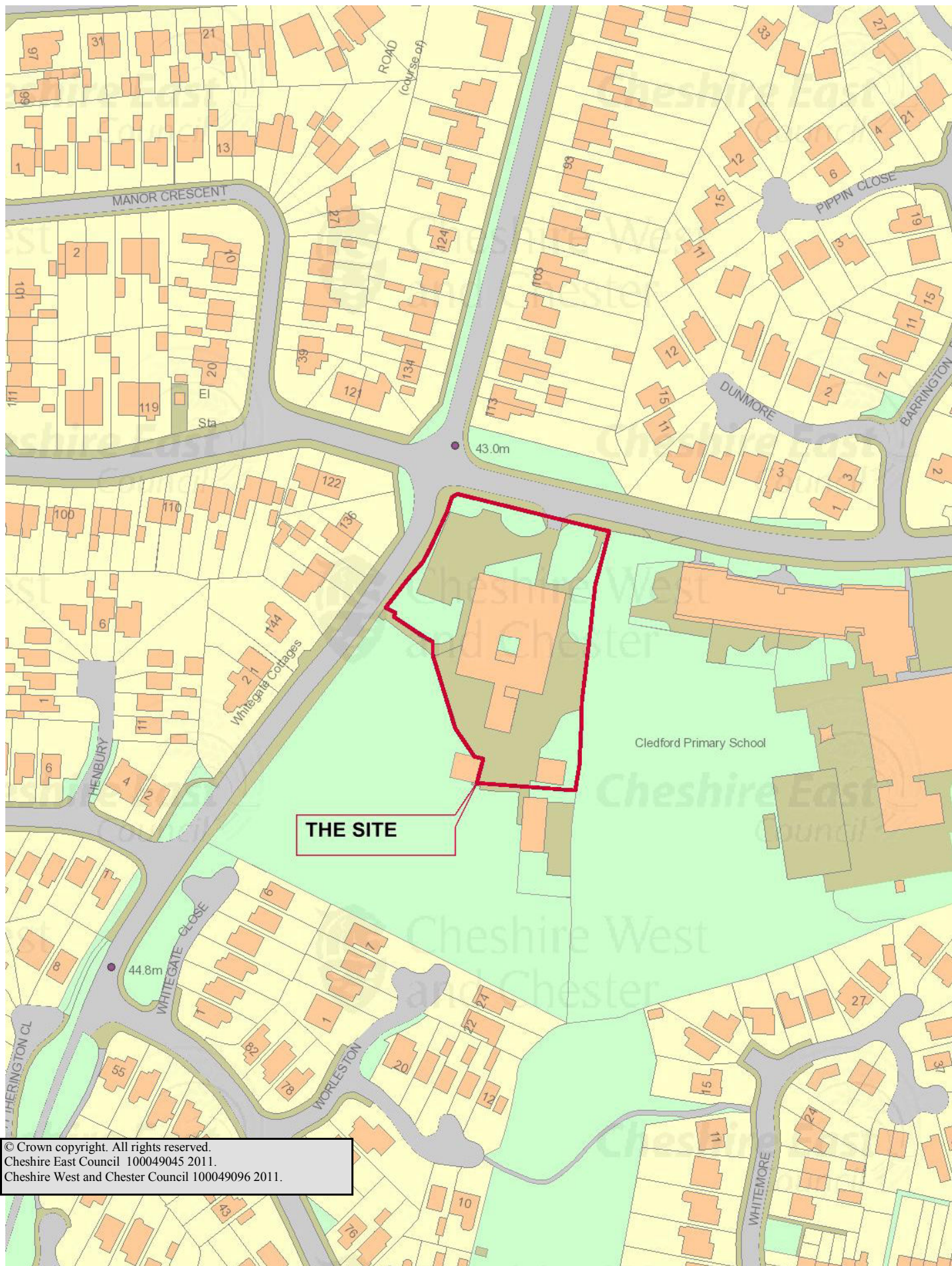
Other Matters

The application form states that new external lighting will be fitted to the building, however no detail has been provided in the application. In the interests of neighbouring residential amenity it is considered that a lighting scheme including details of lux levels should be required by condition.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The application seeks change of use of the former Cledford Infants School to Council Offices for Children and Family Services. The external works are relatively small-scale and would be acceptable in design terms. Use of the building for office purposes would not have a significantly greater impact on neighbouring residential amenity over and above the former use of the site as a school. Additional parking provision is provided within the site and there would be no adverse impacts on highway safety as a result of the proposal. It is considered that the application seeks an acceptable form of development and would comply with the provisions of policies GR1 (New Development), GR2 (Design), GR6 (Amenity and Health), GR9 (Access, Servicing and Parking Provision) and RC2 (Protected Area of Open Space) of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review 2005. The application is therefore recommended for approval accordingly, subject to the following conditions:

1. Commencement of development (3 years)
2. Development in accord with approved plans
3. Materials as application
4. External Lighting details to be approved
5. Provision of car parking layout prior to use commencing



THE SITE

Cledford Primary School