

Application No: 12/0313M

Location: BEXTON PRIMARY SCHOOL, BLACKHILL LANE, KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE, WA16 9DB

Proposal: Extension to Bexton Primary School, to provide a link corridor, two classrooms and a flexible resource space. Facilities replace three temporary classroom units, which are to be demolished.

Applicant: Phil Yeomans, Cheshire East Council

Expiry Date: 15-Mar-2012

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact of the development on the Green Belt
- Design considerations
- Impact on residential amenity
- Highway safety

Date Report Prepared: 29 February 2012

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been referred to the Northern Planning Committee in line with the Cheshire East Borough Council Scheme of Delegation as the landowners and the applicants are Cheshire East Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site relates to a Primary School which currently consists of two main buildings, five temporary classroom units, four of which are clustered together on the southern boundary. The main entrance and car park is accessed from Blackhill Lane, with a segregated pedestrian entrance on the north-east corner of the site. An additional pedestrian access is sited on Bexton Lane, which via a suburban housing estate connects to the A50 main road on the southern edge of Knutsford.

The site is bordered by residential development, but with open fields to the west. The site lies within the Green Belt as defined by the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The School is currently split into two distinct blocks, one containing the Junior School along with administration, main entrance, the hall and the kitchens, and the other containing the Infant & Reception age classrooms.

The application relates to a proposed infill extension to the school. This will provide 2 new classrooms and associated facilities, and will also form a link block between the currently unconnected halves of the school. The development will result in 275m² of additional floorspace, however 3no. existing temporary classroom units to the rear totalling approximately 309m² will also be removed as part of the development, as well as 2no. sheds, garaging and bin store/ fencing will also be removed.

POLICIES

The North West Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1- Spatial Principles
DP2 Promote Sustainable Communities
DP7- Promote Environmental Quality
RDF4 Green Belts
L1 Health, Sport, Recreation, Cultural and Educational Services Provision

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan Policy

GC1 Green Belt (New Build)
BE1 Design Guidance
DC1 Design - New Build
DC2 Alterations and Extensions
DC3 Amenity
DC6 Circulation and Access
DC9 Tree Protection

Other Material Considerations

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development
PPG2 Green Belt
PPG13 Transport

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways:

No Objection.

Environmental Health:

No objection subject to conditions regarding the timing of construction and related activities.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following documents were submitted in support of the application and are available on the application file: -

Design and Access Statement

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The principle of development in this location is acceptable, subject to Green Belt, design, amenity, highways issues as examined below.

Green Belt

The extension would not fall under any of the criteria listed under policy GC1 or paragraph 3.4 of Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 as appropriate development; and so this development is considered to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 2, very special circumstances are therefore required which would have to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by virtue of inappropriateness and any other harm. In this case the submitted very special circumstances are as follows:

- The new building replaces temporary classroom units which will be demolished on completion.
- The gross area of construction is less than the gross area of the buildings to be replaced.
- The new build footprint is located partially on one of the temporary units to be demolished, and also sits on the footprint of storage and ancillary structures, which are also to be removed.
- Where not on the footprint of existing structures, the new build is largely sited on an area of tarmac hard standing.
- The site being developed is Brownfield as opposed to Greenfield.
- The visual amenity of the area will be improved by the removal of temporary units at the end of their lives, unsightly ancillary structures, and with the replacement of these with purpose built permanent structures.
- No area of playing field will be lost, and grassed open space will be gained by the removal of the temporary units.

Furthermore it is noted that the construction of the new extension in this location provides the opportunity to create a fully enclosed link corridor along the most direct route between the buildings, facilitating circulation and access in line with the long term strategy of the functions of the school for improving the teaching and learning environments whilst improving pupil safety and comfort.

The parking on site would also be reconfigured as part of the proposal, with the same overall number of spaces but with the improvement of 1no. disabled car parking space.

The above material considerations are considered to constitute the very special circumstances required to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by virtue of inappropriateness.

Furthermore it is considered that there would be no other resultant harm to the visual amenities and character, appearance and openness of the Green Belt as a result of this development. The net amount of built form on site would reduce due to the demolition of the existing temporary buildings, whilst the extension would be an infill extension hence would not significantly reduce openness within the site.

Overall therefore the development would accord with PPG2.

Design

The infill extension would be of similar scale and appearance to the existing building, with materials which would be conditioned to respect the existing building.

It is considered that overall the development is of a good quality design which would make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the locality, having regard to policies BE1 and DC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

Amenity

No objections have been received. The extension would be no closer to the properties directly facing than the existing school buildings facing other properties along Blackhill Road.

Overall the development is considered to comply with the distance criteria in policies DC3, DC38 and there is not considered to be a sufficiently adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring property in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impact to warrant refusal.

Highways

The Strategic Highways and Transportation Manager raises no objection. He states;

I consider that this is a replacement facility and that it does not alter the traffic generation to and from the site and no highway objections are raised to the proposal.

Overall the scheme would comply with policy DC6.

Trees

1no. tree is to be removed as part of the development. This tree is not protected nor deemed worthy of protection by the Tree Officer, therefore the development would accord with policy DC9.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However the very special circumstances submitted are considered in this case to outweigh the harm by virtue of inappropriateness and it is considered that there is no other harm associated with the development. The proposal would therefore comply with national and local Green Belt policy.

The development would be of appropriate design and have an acceptable impact on neighbouring amenity and highway safety and is considered to be in compliance with the relevant policies of the Development Plan. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

1. AD01 - Complies with development plan
2. AD14 - Acceptable relationship adjacent and wider
3. AD15 - Acceptable impact on amenity
4. AD20 - visual impact
5. POL01 - Policies
6. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
7. A03AP - Development in accord with revised plans (unnumbered)
8. A05EX - Details of materials to be submitted
9. A22GR - Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
10. Pile Driving
11. Float Floor Finishing

