

Application No: 12/2227M

Location: Egerton Primary School, BEXTON ROAD, KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE, WA16 0EE

Proposal: New Mobile Classroom

Applicant: Mrs Alison Hooper

Expiry Date: 09-Aug-2012

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to condition

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon the public Open Space
- Impact on Heritage & Design

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been referred to the Southern Planning Committee because the application relates to a school building owned by Cheshire East Council and the application is to be determined by Cheshire East Council.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises the grounds of Egerton Primary School which is located on Bexton Road in Knutsford. The site lies outside of the Conservation Area boundary and outside of the town centre boundary but is an area of designated open space.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposals relate to the construction of a mobile classroom measuring 18.1m x 8.65m and reaching a height of 2.9m.

RELEVANT HISTORY

11/1739M Installation of freestanding pergola approved 16-Aug-2011

07/2344P single storey front extension to form new entrance. formation of new pedestrian access approved 02-Nov-2007

01/1775P single-storey library extension in courtyard approved 02-Oct-2001
99/0001P mobile classroom approved 04-Feb-1999
71647P mobile classroom approved 16-Sep-1992

POLICIES

Regional Planning Policy

As part of its stated commitment to protecting the environment the Government decided to carry out an environmental assessment of the revocation of the existing regional strategies, on a voluntary basis. It is the Government's clear policy intention to revoke existing regional strategies outside London, but this is subject to the outcome of environmental assessments and will not be undertaken until the Secretary of State and Parliament have had the opportunity to consider the findings of the assessments.

The regional strategy whose revocation is proposed is the *North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021*, published in September 2008. The environmental report on the revocation of the North West of England Plan was undertaken on 20 January 2012. As the abolition of the RSS is imminent, the policies within the RSS are given limited weight. In any event, the policies are listed below:

North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021

DP1 (Spatial principles applicable to development management)
DP7 (Criteria to promote environmental quality)

Local Plan Policy

The policies within the Macclesfield Local Plan 2004 have been 'saved' by the Secretary of State prior to the production of the Cheshire East Local Plan.

Para 215 of the NPPF indicates that relevant policies in existing plans will be given weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan – saved policies

BE1 (Design principles for new developments)
BE3 (Conservation areas)
DC1 (High quality design for new build)
DC2 (Design quality for extensions and alterations)
DC3 (Protection of the amenities of nearby residential properties)
RT1 (Protection of open spaces)

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework
Open Space Summary Report

CONSULTATIONS

Archaeology – no mitigation required

United Utilities - no objections

Sport England – none received at time of writing report

Strategic Highways Manager – none received at time of writing report

Environmental Health - none received at time of writing report

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None at time of writing report

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following documents have been submitted to accompany the application:

Design and Access Statement

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The proposals relate to the construction of a mobile classroom on an area of designated public open space.

The Framework indicates that decisions should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities. Para 72 states that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand and alter schools.

That said, paras 73 and 74 suggest a presumption in favour of the protection of public open spaces however policies should be based on up to date assessments.

The Open Space Summary Report indicates that the majority of outdoor sports facilities are not available to members of the public. In this instance, the entire Egerton primary school site (including school buildings) is designated open space. However this is one such example of where the facilities are not open to the public. There is a playing field to the north of the school buildings and an area of hardstanding which is the school play ground to the south. The proposed mobile classroom is to be located to the north on the playing field.

Policy RT.1 states that open space will be protected from development however it then indicates that the replacement of educational buildings may be permitted provided that the integrity of the open space is not harmed.

The key issue is therefore the impact of the mobile classroom on the integrity of the open space.

Whilst the mobile classroom would be a solid structure, it is located on an area inaccessible to the public. Given that the building has a floor area of 156.6 sq. m and the play area measures 7777 sq. m (approx) this would not be a significant reduction in the space available to play.

Given the very positive benefits in terms of ensuring a sufficient choice of school places and given that there would be a limited adverse impact on public open space, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable.

Heritage & Design

The site has been deliberately excluded from the Conservation Area boundary, however, it does nonetheless, bound the Knutsford Town Centre Conservation Area boundary.

The existing school building is utilitarian in appearance following function rather than form. It is a predominantly brick structure with panels comprising glazing and carbon fibre. The building has a flat roof. The proposed structure is similar in character, it would also have a flat roof and have a horizontal emphasis which reflects the character of the main building. A combination of the diminutive proportions of the new classroom and its simple and utilitarian design which reflects the form of the existing school building ensures that this new mobile classroom respects the character and appearance of the existing building and the use of the site as a school. In so doing, the proposals accord with policies DC1, DC2 and BE1.

Other Matters

The proposals do not raise any concerns for highway safety.

Turning to neighbouring amenity, the main area of concern is disturbance created during the construction period; however this can be mitigated via the imposition of a condition.

Whilst there are protected trees on the site, these are located adjacent to the playing field to the north of the school buildings and would thus be unaffected by the proposals.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

As noted above, it is considered that the proposed new mobile classroom represents an appropriate form of development and would not prejudice the retention of public open space. The design respects the character of the existing building and the functional relationship with the school playing fields and would be in keeping with the purpose it will serve. The proposals as conditioned would not have an adverse impact upon heritage, the character of the area, highway safety, amenity, trees or in any other way. The development therefore complies with policies BE1 (Design principles for new developments), DC1 (High quality design for new build), DC2 (Design quality for extensions and alterations), DC3 (Protection of the amenities of nearby residential properties), BE3 (Conservation areas) and RT1 (Protection of Open Spaces) of the Macclesfield Local Plan 2004.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. Standard three year time limit
2. Submission of materials details
3. Construction hours restricted to 0730 to 1800 hours on Monday to Friday, 0730 to 1400 hours on Saturday, with no work at any other time including Sundays and Public Holidays.
4. Materials to be submitted



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