

Planning reference No:	09/2718W
Location:	Cledford County Junior School, George Vi Avenue, Middlewich, Cheshire, CW10 0DD
Proposal:	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
Applicant:	Mr Peter Broughton, Cheshire East Council
Application Type:	Full
Ward:	Middlewich
Earliest Determination Date:	30 September 2009
Expiry Date:	19 November 2009
Date report Prepared:	29 October 2009
Constraints	Protected area of open space Playing fields

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

MAIN ISSUES

The impact of the proposed development on:

- Protected Area of Open Space**
- Design**
- Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency**
- Highways and parking provision**
- Safer routes and sustainable travel to school**
- Drainage and flood risk**
- Playing fields and sports provision**
- Residential Amenity; Noise**
- Residential Amenity; Light Pollution**
- Nature Conservation**
- Trees**
- Landscape**

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

The proposal is classified as a 'small scale major development' due to its scale, and therefore, this application has been referred to the Southern Planning Committee for determination. Furthermore, Cheshire East Council is the applicant for this application.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is an existing school known as Cledford Junior School and is located within a Protected Area of Open Space as designated by the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review. The School is situated approximately 1km to the south of Middlewich town centre and is encompassed by residential properties to the north, east and south, with Cledford Infant School located to the west. Long Lane South forms the northern boundary of the school, with George VI Avenue on the eastern boundary.

The school's playing field is located to the west and south of the existing junior school building, and is also allocated within the Protected Area of Open Space within the Local Plan. The topography of the site is relatively flat with the school building in a prominent position on the corner of Long Lane South and George VI Avenue, with the access from George VI Avenue. The north and east boundaries of the school also benefit from the presence of semi mature trees, which assist in screening the existing school and car park.

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The application has been made by Cheshire East Borough Council to seek planning permission to extend and adapt the existing junior school building to provide accommodation for the nursery and infant pupils from the neighbouring school. This proposal would enable the merger of the two schools, to form one 420 place all-through primary school on one site, as opposed to operating over two separate sites.

The proposal comprises of two main building elements. The first is a smaller single storey extension with a proposed floorspace of 278 m² (building 2) and is proposed to be constructed to link to the south of the existing school building and would accommodate Key Stage 2 classrooms. The second is a larger building with a proposed floorspace of 955 m² (building 1) which would be constructed to link to the north of the existing school and to follow the boundary of Long Lane South. Building 1 would be partly single storey and would provide classrooms for the relocated infants and nursery children (Foundation and Key Stage 1). Also, a double height (8.4m high) multi purpose activity community hall is proposed at the north eastern corner of the proposed extension, which would provide a link in between the existing building and the proposed new Foundation and Key Stage 1 classrooms.

The proposal also includes:-

- A 1.8m high paladin fence which would be installed on all road facing boundaries;
- An extension to the existing car park by an increase of 33 no. additional parking spaces (including 5 no. disabled spaces);
- A covered cycle shelter which would accommodate 10 no. bicycles
- Tree planting and landscaping, both hard and soft;
- Re-marking and re-draining the school's playing field for football provision;

- Extension to existing hard play area to provide a games court enclosed by a 2.75m high weld-mesh fence;
- Shade canopies and gazebos within the main play area, and also the infants, nursery and reception play areas;
- Low level fencing to define Foundation and Key Stage 1 stage play areas;
- Demolition of two existing demountable classrooms;
- A new vehicular (for construction and maintenance) and two new pedestrian access points from Long Lane South;
- Relocating existing bin store to accommodate recycling bins;
- An allotment to the south of the site;
- Relocating existing play equipment to create an adventure play area to the south of the proposed games court; and
- External lighting (security and car park lights) and CCTV (with no audible system).

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Various demountable class room permissions between 1991 – 1997

1994 – Two Classroom Extension (8/26337)

1995 – Small Extension to staff accommodation (8/27748/3)

5. POLICIES

National Planning Policy Statements/Guidance

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPG13: Transport

PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sports and Recreation

PPS22: Renewable Energy

PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control

PPS25: Development and Flood Risk

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1 Spatial Principles

DP4 Make the Best use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure

DP7 Promote Environmental Quality

EM17 Renewable Energy

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GR2 Design

GR4 Landscaping

GR5 Landscaping

GR6 Amenity and Health

GR7 Amenity and Health

GR14 Cycling Measures

GR15 Pedestrian Measures

GR17 Car Parking

GR18 Traffic Generation

GR20 Public Utilities

GR21 Flood Prevention

NR1 Trees and Woodland
NR2 Wildlife and Nature Conservation; Statutory Sites
NR9 Renewable Energy
RC2 Protected Areas of Open Space
RC10 Outdoor Formal Recreation and Amenity Open Space Facilities
RC11 Indoor Recreation and Community Uses

6. Other Material Considerations

Sport England Policy E5 Playing Fields

7. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

The Strategic Highways and Transport Manager does not object to the proposal subject to the inclusion of an informative, with regards to:

- All access construction adjoining the public highway to be constructed and integrated to a Cheshire East Council's specification and agreed with the LPA. This will be subject to a s278 Agreement under the Highways Act 1980 which would be signed by all relevant parties prior to the commencement of development on site.

The Environment Agency do not object to the proposal subject to the inclusion of an informative, with regards to land contamination issues and suggests that the applicant should follow the requirements of PPS23 and the Environment Agency Guidance on Requirements for Land Contamination Reports.

Environmental Health does not object to the proposals; no further work is required from a contaminated land point of view and the building works do not need any gas protection measures. An asbestos survey should be undertaken prior to any demolition to identify any possible sources of asbestos in the buildings; all recommendations made in the Land Contamination report should be undertaken.

The Safer Routes to School Team does not object to the proposals subject to a condition being attached to any decision notice requiring the school to complete a school travel plan that takes into account the school merger.

The Safer Routes to School Team have provided comments to try to encourage pupils and staff to travel to school more sustainably by providing a cycle path directly to the cycle parking facilities, and also to provide a pedestrian gate on the western boundary of the school grounds adjoining the existing infants' school site.

United Utilities do not object to the proposals subject to the site being drained on a separate system, with only foul drainage connected into the foul sewer. Surface water should discharge to the soakaway/ watercourse/ surface water sewer and may require consent from the Environment Agency. Also, if surface water is allowed to be discharged to the public surface water system this may be required to be attenuated to a maximum discharge rate determined by United Utilities.

Sport England does not object to the proposals subject to the following conditions being attached to any decision notice:

- Drainage of the playing fields to be carried out in accordance with the submitted scheme by 31 December 2010;
- The submission of a management and maintenance scheme to include measures to ensure the sustained quality of the playing field, management responsibilities, a maintenance schedule and a mechanism for review;
- The submission of a community use scheme for the indoor and outdoor sports provision to be implemented 6 months after the completion of the development; and
- Removal of site compound and construction equipment within 2 months of the completion of the development, and the subsequent restoration of the playing fields within 3 months of their removal, or within the first planting season (whichever sooner).

The Environmental Protection Officer does not object to the proposal in terms of noise or light pollution subject to the following conditions being attached to any decision notice:

- The erection of a 1.2m high fence around the boundary of the proposed car park to protect properties from car headlight nuisance;
- Car park lighting to be operated by a timer facility outside daylight hours and shall not be used between the hours of 22.00hrs and 08.00hrs
- Security lighting to be operated by a timer facility and outside these times operated by motion sensors for security purposes; and
- Submission of a revised lighting scheme to address the above details and minimise light trespass from the car park lighting onto the highway.

The Nature Conservation Officer does not object to the proposal subject to a condition being attached to any decision notice to avoid any disturbance of breeding birds during site clearance works.

The Landscape Officer has concerns with regards to the location of the proposed extension at the north of the site and its proximity to the trees on the northern boundary of the site; the proposed extension may have implications on the long term viability of the relatively immature sized trees. As such, the Landscape officer does not consider that the proposal has fully taken into account the growth potential of these trees. However, if these trees are to be retained in the longer term, it is imperative that comprehensive protection is implemented as stated within the arboricultural implications assessment.

The Landscape Officer suggests that the tree planting scheme should be revised as some of the replacement trees proposed are not appropriate in their current locations.

The Arboricultural Officer concurs with the comments made by the Landscape Officer with regards to the need for greater separation between the proposed extension and the trees along the northern boundary of the site.

Furthermore, the Arboricultural Officer considers that there would be a potential impact on the tree root systems where the two new pedestrian and vehicular access points are proposed. Also, long-term problems could arise for the maintenance and future use of a new tarmac games court which is proposed to the south of the site, as it would be close to a belt of mixed species trees.

The Arboricultural Officer recommends that the location of the games court should be located further to the north, so that greater separation between the trees and the court is achieved, to prevent root damage to the surface, and to ensure the long term viability of the court.

With regards to the trees along the northern boundary that could be affected by the close proximity to building 1 and the new access points, a condition would be required to secure protection measures for retained trees in the form of a comprehensive arboricultural method statement that would include ground and root protection measures for all trees, complete with details of special construction measures where works encroach within tree root protection areas/ construction exclusion zones. The arboricultural method statement should also include provision for replacement tree planting should trees become damaged during the construction of the building. This would be secured by condition; species and location to be agreed prior to planting.

8. VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

At the time of writing the report, no comments have been received from Middlewich Town Council.

9. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of representation has been received from a resident of Long Lane South. The representor does not object to the application as they do not consider the proposal would have a material impact upon them. However, they have made comments and suggestions regarding issues that are considered within this report including: -

- The increase in vehicles on site could give rise to noise from doors banging which could be attenuated by an acoustic fence on the boundary of the car park; and
- Lighting controls should be required to ensure that the proposed lights on the car park and proposed extension would not cause a statutory nuisance

10. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The full planning application was accompanied by:

- Relevant plans/architectural drawings;
- Arboricultural Implications Assessment;
- Ecological Assessment including a Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
- Cledford Junior School Travel Plan;
- Renewable Energy Feasibility Study;
- Utilities Statement;
- External Lighting Controls Statement;
- Mechanical and Engineering Design Statement;
- Thermal and Energy Efficiency Statement;
- Site Compound and Access arrangements;
- Desk Study Assessment Report for Contaminated Land;
- External Services/CCTV and lighting drawing;
- External lighting information sheets and distribution information;
- Supporting Planning Statement;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Geo-Environmental Assessment Report;
- Flood Risk and Run-off Assessment;
- Drainage proposals Drawing;
- Design and Access Statement;

- Landscaping Proposals; and
- Tree/landscaping Planting schedule and specification

11. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

Cledford Primary School currently occupies two separate sites, with the junior wing at a site on George VI Avenue (the application site) and the nursery and infants' school at the neighbouring site to the west on Long Lane South. The infants' school site is smaller and, following the outcome of a feasibility study, it was not considered feasible to create a combined primary school on this site. Therefore, the decision was taken to apply for planning permission to extend the existing single storey junior school to accommodate the relocated infants' and nursery children.

This proposal forms part of Cheshire East Council's response to the 'Every Child Matters' Agenda and the Children Act 2004, and is part of a full review of all school provision across Cheshire; the Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Initiative, which objectives are to remove surplus school places whilst meeting wider community needs where possible.

Whilst separate nursery/infant and junior schools have their own individual strengths, it is considered that an all-through primary school located on one site can incorporate these strengths, whilst also providing several additional benefits for the children which are outlined within the planning statement of the planning application. This proposal illustrates the Authorities commitment to improving the quality of education for all children by minimising the need for children to transfer between schools.

As the proposal utilises an existing school to accommodate a new all-through primary school, it is considered that the project meets the principles of Policy DP4 of the RSS as it makes use of existing resources and infrastructure.

Protected Areas of Open Space (Policy RC2)

The entire school site is allocated as Protected Area of Open Space as designated within the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review. As the proposal is for an extension to the existing school, it is associated with the current use of the site, and forms extensions to existing buildings within the designated area.

The school grounds are not publically accessible at present. However, it is proposed that community access would be granted out of school hours thus providing opportunities to increase the community sports provision in the area. The existing open space would be vastly improved for the benefit of the school children and the wider community, which would result in improved use by providing new play areas, dedicated games courts and pitches. The proposal also includes improved drainage of the playing field which at present floods during excessive rain.

The footprints of the proposed extensions have been designed in such a way to minimise the loss of the open space provision so that the remaining open space can be maximised to its full potential. It is considered that the proposed improvements to the existing outdoor and indoor

facilities, and extended recreation provision for the wider community would offset the minor loss of open space which would result from the proposed extensions and therefore on balance, the proposal is in accordance with Policy RC2 'Protected Areas of Open Space' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

Design

As stated above, the locations of the proposed extensions have been designed to minimise the loss of open space and sports provision to meet the requirements of Policy RC2, and also the requirements of Sport England which will be discussed below. The scale of the proposal is proportionate to the surrounding residential area; bungalows on George VI Avenue and two storey detached and semi-detached houses along Long Lane South.

Building 2, the smaller of the two extensions, is proposed to be single storey and constructed to link to the south of the existing school and has been designed to replicate the style of the previous extension at the school in 1994, with matching facing bricks and pitched tiled roof.

Due to its prominent location on the corner of Long Lane South and George VI Avenue, it is proposed to use a pallet of materials for Building 1 with the intention to provide a focal point for the area. For the northern elevation, which faces Long Lane South, it is proposed to use matching facing bricks, coloured render, timber cladding, and with aluminium cladding along the top of the activity community hall to break up and lighten this part of the elevation. The lower part of the community hall, the north east corner of the elevation would be rendered and, subject to condition, approved artwork inspired by the school children would be installed.

The materials proposed for the southern elevation which faces the external play space, includes coloured render and vertical timber cladding to emphasise the recesses in the building which form the covered play areas. Out of school hours the covered play areas would be secured by roller shutters providing safe and secure outdoor play equipment storage. Shade canopies and gazebos are also proposed to provide shade in the play areas. Should planning permission be granted details of all materials proposed including shade canopies, gazebos and roller shutters would be agreed by condition.

External doors and windows would be aluminium framed and polyester powder coated, and all existing windows and doors on site would also be replaced. Rainwater goods would be sourced to match the existing material, profile and colour.

It is considered in terms of design that the proposal is sympathetic to the character, appearance and form of the site and the surrounding area, and hard and soft landscaping are proposed which are integral to the scheme. CCTV is proposed to reduce the risk of crime, and the installation of art on the exterior wall of the community hall would enhance the development and provide a focal point for the area. As such, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with Policy GR2 'Design' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan.

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

To address the provisions within PPS22 and Policy EM17 of the RSS, the application was accompanied by a feasibility study of low and renewable energy technologies which considered various energy saving measures and renewable energy systems for inclusion within the project.

The study provided recommendations based on the energy use and requirements of the school including; lighting controls to reduce electrical load and consumption, solar thermal panels for hot water and photovoltaic panels for electricity generation.

It is proposed that the roofs over Building 1 would be single pitched facing south, allowing photovoltaic and solar thermal hot water panels to be fitted with the benefit of providing renewable energy and hot water for the school, plus providing educational tools for curriculum opportunities, emphasising the importance of renewable energy to the pupils of the school and surrounding community. Should planning permission be granted, specification details would be agreed by condition.

It is considered that the proposed solar panels would not have an unacceptable impact on the design of the building or residential amenity, and as such, the proposal accords with the provisions of Policy NR9 'Renewable Energy' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

The proposal has also been designed to achieve a 'very good' BREEAM rating. The application was accompanied by a thermal and energy efficiency statement, confirming that the services would be designed to meet the requirements of Part L of the building regulations and the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers Guide F (energy efficiency in buildings).

Highways

As the proposal would involve the merger of two schools the impact on the highways network needs to be considered. Whilst the existing school children are currently accommodated on two separate sites, these sites lie juxtaposed, and therefore, it is considered that the merger would not generate any additional traffic for the surrounding highway network. As such it is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with Policies GR6 'Amenity and Health' and also GR18 'Traffic Generation' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

As the proposal would involve the construction of a new vehicular access on to Long Lane South, (initially for construction vehicles, then subsequently for maintenance purposes), Cheshire East Council's Strategic Highways and Transport Manager requires that all construction adjoining the public highway to be constructed and integrated to a Cheshire East Specification and agreed with the Local Planning Authority subject to a section 278 agreement under the Highway Act 1980 which would be required to be signed prior to commencement of development, this would be conditioned.

Parking

The proposal would involve an extension of the existing car park area by the creation of 33 no. additional car parking spaces, including 5 no. disabled spaces, to provide parking provision for the visitors and staff of the school and the users of the community hall after school hours. The additional parking provision is considered to be in accordance with guidance set out in the Cheshire Parking Standards. As such it is considered to be in accordance with Policies GR6 'Amenity and Health' and also GR17 'Car Parking' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

Safer Routes and Sustainable Travel to School

The junior school currently has a school travel plan which was submitted with the planning application. To encourage sustainable methods of transport for the children and staff of the new school, a condition would be attached to require the existing travel plan to be updated to account for the merger of the two schools, with a requirement for an annual review.

The proposal includes measures to encourage cycling to school by the provision of a 10 no. covered cycle store (specification details to be agreed by conditions) and as such, it is considered that the proposal meets the requirements of Policy GR14 'Cycling Measures' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

The Safer Routes to School Team have suggested that a cycle path should be considered as part of the proposal to directly link to the cycle parking facilities. However, at present, the school require cyclists to dismount prior to entering the school gates and to push the cycles into the existing designated storage facilities. Furthermore, the proposed location for the new cycle storage area is immediately after the pedestrian entrance off George VI Avenue, so therefore it is considered that an additional path to link the entrance to the cycle facilities would not be necessary.

In terms of encouraging pupils and staff to walk to school, an additional pedestrian access has been proposed to link directly into the new infants building. This would offer a safe route into the new extension without conflicting with vehicles. As such it is considered to meet the requirements of Policy GR15 'Pedestrian Measures' of the Congleton Borough Council Local Plan First Review. The Safer Routes to School Team have suggested that an additional pedestrian gate should also be provided on the western boundary of the school grounds adjoining the existing infants' school site. However, as the future use of the infants' site is not yet certain, and would be subject to a planning application, it would not be appropriate to install an additional pedestrian gate in the western boundary as part of this planning application.

Drainage and Flood Risk

Drainage plans and a flood risk and run off assessment have accompanied the planning application. The Environment Agency and United Utilities do not object to the proposals.

United Utilities do not object to the proposal subject to the site being drained separately with only foul drainage connected into the foul sewer. Foul would discharge into the combined 255mm diameter foul sewer in George VI Avenue.

With regards to surface water drainage, it is considered that the use of soakaways are inappropriate for this site due to the presence of high silt content of the natural strata and poor soil infiltration rates. Therefore, it is proposed to regulate surface flows through an attenuation system to ensure that the land does not increase flows as a consequence of the development, together with an allowance for climate change. It is proposed that surface water run-off from the development would discharge into 300mm diameter surface water sewer in George VI Avenue.

Should planning permission be granted, a condition would be attached to ensure that drainage details and attenuation rates are agreed, prior to commencement of development.

It is considered that the proposal would be acceptable under the requirements set out in PPS25 and complies with the requirements of Policy 21 'Flood Prevention' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review. Also, it is considered that the requirements of Policy GR20 'Public Utilities' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review would be met once drainage details have been agreed by condition.

Playing Fields and Sports Provision

Sport England have been involved in pre-application discussions with regards to this scheme which has led to a number of alterations to the footprint of original scheme prior to submission, culminating in the proposal being put forward as per this application.

In terms of the impact of the proposal on the school's playing field, the main impact would arise from the proposed extension to the north of the existing school buildings (building 1); the footprint of which would extend onto part of the playing field to the west of the site. However, the extent of the encroachment onto the playing field has been reduced from the previous proposal that had been put forward at the pre-application stage.

As discussed above, the scheme proposes improvements to existing outdoor sports provision which would be available for community use. In addition to outdoor sports provision, the scheme proposes a marked indoor court capable of accommodating a badminton court within the proposed community hall. Furthermore, the school has agreed to enter into a community use agreement for the community hall and outdoor pitch.

During construction works, the site construction compound would also be located on part of the playing field. The impact on the playing field would only be for a temporary period, and, the entire playing field would not be used for the construction compound; the football pitch could be marked out on the remaining area of the playing field.

Therefore, whilst the proposed development would impact upon part of the existing playing field, it is considered that the proposed indoor and outdoor provision would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of playing fields on site. As such it is considered to be in accordance of Sport England Policy E5 Playing Fields, the provisions of PPG17, Policies RC10 'Outdoor Formal Recreation and Amenity Open Space Facilities', and RC11 'Indoor Recreation and Community Uses' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

Sport England does not object to this application subject to conditions outlined above in relation to playing field drainage works to be completed by 31 December 2010, the submission and implementation of a management and maintenance scheme for the playing field, submission and implementation of a community use agreement, and also restoration of the playing field following the construction works.

Residential Amenity; Lighting

The proposal would provide additional lighting within the extended car park area, and also security lighting attached to the proposed extension buildings. The application was

accompanied by a lighting assessment which the Council's Environmental Protection Officer has assessed and does not object to the proposals subject to the following conditions:

- The erection of a 1.2m high fence around the boundary of the proposed car park to protect properties from car headlight nuisance;
- Car park lighting to be operated by a timer facility outside daylight hours and shall not be used between the hours of 22.00hrs and 08.00hrs
- Security lighting attached to the buildings to be operated also by a timer facility with motion sensors outside these times for security purposes; and
- Submission of a revised lighting scheme to address the above and minimise light trespass from the car park lights onto the highway.

Subject to the above, it is considered that the application is in accordance with the provisions of PPS23, Policy DP7 of the RSS and Policy GR7 'Amenity and Health' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

Residential Amenity; Noise

A local resident has raised concerns in relation to the increase of vehicles and the potential increase noise from car doors shutting, and has suggested that an acoustic fence should be installed on the boundary around the car park.

The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has considered the application and has concluded that, due to the anticipated car park use being largely at school start and finishing times, and also the proposed low number of cars expected to use the car parking facilities during the evenings, the application would not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise, and therefore an acoustic fence would not be necessary in this instance. The opening hours of the community hall would be restricted to 22.00hrs. In relation to noise pollution, it is considered that the application is in accordance with PPS23, Policy DP7 of the RSS, and the provisions of Policy GR7 'Amenity and Health' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First.

CCTV is proposed on site to provide surveillance for the whole site including the new and existing building. However, the specification provided within the application does not provide for loud speakers. Should planning permission be granted, a condition would be attached to prohibit the use of CCTV with an audible setting unless a further planning application is sought, for the avoidance of doubt, and in the interests of residential amenity of the surrounding properties.

Nature Conservation

The planning application was accompanied by an Ecological Assessment which included a Phase 1 Habitat Survey. The Council's Nature Conservation Officer has been consulted and confirms that there does not appear to be any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development.

Should planning permission be granted, a condition would be attached to ensure that site clearance work of vegetation is avoided during the bird breeding season, to safeguard protected species in accordance with PPS9 and Policy NR2 'Statutory Sites' of the Congleton Local Plan First Review. Should this be required between 1st March and 31st August in any year, a detailed survey would be required to check for nesting birds.

Trees

There are a significant number of trees on the site, many of which make a useful contribution to the visual amenity of both the school and the surrounding area. The most prominent trees are on the site boundaries with the trees on the Long Lane South frontage on the northern boundary being particularly prominent. None of the trees are subject to TPO protection.

As part of the proposals, 13 of the 41 individual trees would be removed within the school site including some along the northern boundary. Also 2 of the 3 existing groups of trees are proposed to be removed, as indicated within the submitted arboricultural implications assessment.

Although the design of the new extension has retained the majority of the trees along the northern boundary of the site, it is considered that the location of the proposed extension (building 1) has not fully taken into account the growth potential of the trees along the northern boundary, which may, as a result have an impact on the long term viability and retention of these trees and may result in future losses. Furthermore, the construction of the proposed new pedestrian and vehicular access points could have an impact on the tree root systems, as these are proposed within construction exclusion zones.

It is considered that the site layout and the location of the proposed building has been put forward to ensure that the playing field and the protected open space is not encroached any more than necessary; to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with policy RC2 'Protected Areas of Open Space' and also the Sport England policy on playing fields. Therefore the layout has been proposed in such a way to take into account the constraints of the site. Whilst the proposed building is considered to be in close proximity to the trees and the access points would cross tree root zones, it is considered that with careful tree protection and site management and maintenance that the building and the site accesses could be accommodated in the proposed locations.

Therefore, should planning permission be granted, it would be imperative, for the long term viability of these trees and the building to ensure that a comprehensive tree protection plan is in place, to ensure that the trees are protected during construction. This would be achievable through a condition which would be imposed to require the submission of a comprehensive arboricultural method statement; including protection measures for all trees and details of special construction measures and ground protection measures where works would encroach within tree root protection areas. The arboricultural method statement should also include provisions for the event that additional trees need to be removed.

During construction, should it be considered expedient for the health and safety of the school, and its users that some of the boundary trees should be removed, it is considered that this would not be detrimental to the visual impact or amenity of the area as it is considered that the proposed development would be of a high quality design and standard. The site benefits from many existing mature trees which are in no danger of removal. Should additional trees be require to be removed, further tree planting on site would be required on a 1:1 basis, and species and location to be agreed by condition as part of the arboricultural method statement.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer highlighted the potential long term problems for a belt of mix species trees to the south of the site, where the new tarmac games court is proposed, as it

would be located in close proximity to these trees. Therefore, to ensure the long term use of the court, and for the health and safety of the users of the court, an alternative location has been proposed for the games court. The proposed site plan and landscape layout has been revised to show the location of the proposed school allotment to be adjacent to these trees; moved from the north of the games court to the south, thus creating greater separation between the belt of trees and the games court. Sport England has confirmed that this would be acceptable as it would have limited impact on the usable area of retained playing field at the site. As such Sport England has no objection to the re-sighting of the proposed games court.

Landscape

The proposals include both hard and soft landscaping as part of the redevelopment of the site. The submitted landscaping scheme includes Infants' and Nursery play areas, shrub planting, a raised allotment bed, a relocated adventure play area, a woodland path area, a wildflower area, shade canopies, gazebos, a seating area with planting, grass and tarmac areas, and replacement tree planting.

The County's Landscape Officer has considered the submitted landscaping scheme and considers it largely acceptable, however, advises that slight alterations to some of the suggested tree species would be required. Should planning permission be granted, a condition would be attached to require the submission of a revised landscaping scheme to take into account for these errors, and also, a condition would ensure satisfactory provision is made for the maintenance and aftercare of the site, in accordance with Policy GR4 'Landscaping' of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review.

12. CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

This application seeks planning permission to extend the existing Cledford Junior School to accommodate the neighbouring nursery and infants school on one site; providing an all-through primary school. It is considered that the design is of a high standard which incorporates renewable and energy efficiency technologies.

Whilst the application site is designated as a Protected Area of Open Space within the Congleton Borough Local Plan and the building would result in the loss of playing field area, the application includes improved indoor sports provision in the form of a community hall which would accommodate one badminton court, and also improved outdoor sports provision including maintenance and drainage of the playing field to allow increased community use. It is considered that these improvements would benefit the school and the wider community and would therefore compensate for the loss of open space and playing field.

It is considered that the proposal would not cause increased traffic movement, and has provision to encourage sustainable travel to school by the inclusion of cycle storage, pedestrian access points and the requirement to update and revise the school travel plan by condition.

Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed development would not; significantly increase flood risk, have an impact on nature conservation or residential amenity by increase in noise. Also, any increase in light attributed to the development could be controlled by condition satisfactorily so that it would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity.

A balance has to be drawn between potential impact on trees and potential tree loss, and the protected area of open space and loss of playing fields. It is considered that, with a comprehensive tree protection plan; including protection measures for all trees and details of special construction measures and ground protection measures where works would encroach within tree root protection areas, that the proposed building 1 and access points could be accommodated on the site without causing a detrimental impact on trees, open space or playing fields.

Furthermore, should it be expedient to remove some of the trees along the northern boundary of the site it is considered that this would not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area, as the proposed extension is considered to be of a high quality design. Any trees that would be lost as a result of this proposal would be replaced accordingly with appropriate species to be agreed and on a 1:1 basis and those that remain would be protected to avoid any damage to ensure the successful retention (as stated within the arboricultural method statement). None of the trees on site are subject to TPO protection and, the potential loss of trees does not warrant a significant reason for refusal.

It is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the provisions of the development plan as outlined above and there is no reason to refuse this application, therefore planning permission should be granted subject to the following conditions.

13. RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions:

- 1. Approved plans**
- 2. Implementation time**
- 3. Written notification**
- 4. Art work for infants' activity/community hall**
- 5. Materials to match existing and to be agreed where necessary**
- 6. Details of shade canopies, gazebos and roller shutters**
- 7. Specification details of solar panels agreed**
- 8. Highways construction specification and signing of s278 prior to commencement of development**
- 9. Update and Revise School Travel Plan**
- 10. Details of cycle storage**
- 11. Site Drainage details agreed for attenuation rates**
- 12. Drainage of the playing fields by 31 December 2010**
- 13. Management and maintenance scheme for the playing fields**
- 14. Community Use Scheme for indoor and outdoor sports provision**
- 15. Playing field site restoration**
- 16. 1.2m fence around the boundary of the car park**
- 17. Restricted use of car park lights (not used between 22.00 and 8.00)**
- 18. Security lighting to be on a motion sensor**
- 19. Submission of revised lighting scheme to include the above and minimise light trespass on to the highway**
- 20. Hours of operation of the community hall no later than 22:00**
- 21. No audible feature on CCTV**
- 22. Site clearance works to avoid the bird breeding season**
- 23. Tree protection in accordance the arboricultural implications assessment**

- 24. Comprehensive arboricultural method statement to include protection measures for all trees and details of special construction measures where works encroach within tree root protection areas and additional Tree Planting where additional losses occur 1:1 with an appropriate replacement agreed**
- 25. Revise the submitted tree planting plan/landscaping plan**
- 26. Landscaping maintenance and aftercare**

Location Plan : Cheshire East Council Licence No 100018515

