

Application No: 12/2997M

Location: WILMSLOW HIGH SCHOOL, HOLLY ROAD NORTH, WILMSLOW, CHESHIRE, SK9 1LZ

Proposal: Two Storey Extension to Existing Sixth Form Teaching Block to Provide Learning Support Centre and Associated Soft and Hard Landscaping Works

Applicant: Mr R Davies, The Board of Governors

Expiry Date: 05-Nov-2012

Date Report Prepared: 03 October 2012

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon the character and appearance of the area
- Impact on residential amenity
- Impact upon highway safety
- Impact upon existing open space
- Impact upon nature conservation interests
- Impact upon trees of amenity value

REASON FOR REPORT

The application is for an extension of over 1000sqm, therefore it is a major application and qualifies to be determined by the Northern Planning Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises part of the playing field land of Wilmslow High School. Located between the existing sixth form teaching block and the ponds on the western side of the site upon a grassed area with some external seating, the site is within an area of Existing Open Space as identified in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission to erect a two-storey extension to the existing sixth form block to provide a learning support centre.

RELEVANT HISTORY

There have been a number of applications to extend the school over the years; however none are specifically relevant to the current proposal. The sixth form block being extended was granted planning consent in 2003 (03/0543P).

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1 (Spatial Principles)

DP2 (Promote Sustainable Communities)

DP4 (Making the Best Use of Existing Resources & Infrastructure)

DP7 (Criteria to promote environmental quality)

L1 (Health, Sport, Recreation, Cultural & Educational Services Provision)

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan

NE11 (Protection of nature conservation interests)

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)

DC6 (Circulation and Access)

DC8 (Landscaping)

DC9 (Protection of trees of amenity value)

H13 (Protecting residential areas)

RT1 (Protection of Open Space)

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework)

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Strategic Highways Manager - No objection as there will not be any increase in staff or student numbers from this development proposal. This means that any additional traffic generation will be of no material concern locally.

Environmental Health – Comments not received at time of report preparation

Sport England – No objection, the extension will be located on a narrow triangular shaped part of the playing field between the existing school buildings to the east and woodland with ponds to the west. The functional part of the playing field is to the north of the proposed location and currently accommodates two rugby pitches which will not be affected by the proposal. The triangular part of the playing field is too small and oddly shaped to accommodate a pitch or part of pitch and there are no other sports facilities within this area.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

Wilmslow Town Council – No objections but noted residents' views regarding the provision of a pathway on school land in order to access the town centre and would support the views expressed by the neighbour.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Two letters of representation have been received making the following comments on the application:

- Construction traffic should be required to avoid the residential roads of Broadway and Holly Road North (either from Broadway Meadows or the by-pass).
- Application refers to the long term plan to have a pedestrian link through the northern school boundary to make access between the school and the town easier. Such a link was a condition of Cheshire Council's consent to the planning application for the existing building in 2003 (condition 21 of 03/0543P) and subsequent attempts to have this enforced and a northern pedestrian entry opened up have met with one excuse for deferral after another.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The applicant has submitted a design & access statement outlining the design philosophy behind the proposal, a utilities statement, a site investigation report, a noise impact report, an energy report, a tree survey and implications report and a phase 1 habitat survey.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development / Existing Open Space

The Site is located within an area of Existing Open Space as defined in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004. The proposal therefore falls to be assessed against policy RT1 of the Local Plan that seeks to protect areas of open space from development, which is consistent with the objectives of paragraph 74 of the Framework. Policy RT1 does allow for additional or replacement educational buildings provided that the integrity of the open space is not harmed. The Framework also states at paragraph 72 that local planning authorities should: *"give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools."*

In this case the proposed extension is located between the existing sixth form teaching block and the ponds on the western side of the site upon a grassed area with some external seating. The area is not part of a formal sports pitch, but it does provide some informal playing field land. Sport England have commented on the proposal and noted that the functional part of the playing field is to the north of the proposed location and currently accommodates two rugby pitches which will not be affected by the proposal. This triangular part of the playing field is too small and oddly shaped to accommodate a pitch or part of pitch and there are no other sports facilities within this area of land. Given that the proposed development affects land that is not capable of forming any part of a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of, or inability to make use of, a playing pitch, or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on site Sport England raises no objections.

Having regard to the comments from Sport England, particularly given the limited extent and particular nature of the land concerned, the proposal is not considered to harm the integrity of

the open space, and therefore complies with policy RT1 of the Local Plan and the requirements of the Framework.

Design

Local Plan policies BE1, H13 and DC1 address matters of design and appearance. Policy BE1 states that the Council will promote high standards of design and new development should reflect local character, use appropriate materials and respect form, layout, siting, scale and design of surrounding buildings and their setting. Policy DC1 states that the overall scale, density, height, mass and materials of new development must normally be sympathetic to the character of the local environment, street scene, adjoining buildings and the site itself. The National Planning Policy Framework also notes that “good design is a key aspect of sustainable development”.

The wider high school site is occupied by buildings of varied age and style. The existing sixth form block is probably the building with the most modern appearance within the site. The proposed extension is designed with a mono pitch roof sloping down towards the existing sixth form block. It is noted that whilst the extension will not replicate the existing building, it will utilise the same materials, but in a different way and pick up on some of the existing features of the building. The materials on the existing building comprise white masonry at low level, white render, red terracotta cladding and blue engineering brick. The proposed external cladding to the extension will use cladding panels of similar colour and material to the existing terracotta cladding but the individual panels will be longer in length and hung vertically. The verticality of these panels will then be balanced by the horizontal orientation of the windows. The cladding will terminate in a horizontal line at high level around the building which will reflect the strong horizontal line of the existing building eaves. The area of wall above the cladding and also to the end gables of the building will be white render reflecting that used on the existing building. The new spine walls through the core of the new building will be blue engineering brickwork to match the existing. There will be a low plinth to the whole new extension in blue engineering brickwork. The roof will be standing seam metal powder coated grey to match the existing building fascia.

The angled positioning takes advantage of the access routes to the existing building, one formal, one informal, and also creates visual interest for the building as a whole. Given the variety of buildings within the site it is considered that the design will relate well to the existing structures.

Broadway, which runs along the western boundary of the application site, is bordered by mature, dense vegetation, and the copse surrounding the ponds close to where the extension will be sited is denser still. The building will be visible from the properties on Covington Place to the north. Overall it is considered that the proposed extension will relate well to the existing building and have an acceptable impact upon the character of the area, in accordance with policies BE1, DC1 and DC2 of the Local Plan.

Trees and landscaping

The proposed extension comes very close to the woodland edge trees surrounding the ponds located to the west of the application site. This woodland belt provides an important screen for the residents of Broadway from school activities and the visual impact of the proposed new extension.

Whilst the submitted tree report suggests that the proposed development will not impinge upon the existing trees, the arboricultural officer initially raised some questions over the detail within the report. Specifically with regard to the tree protection details and the potential impact of construction traffic and activity at this pinch point between the extension and the trees. Additional information has now been submitted to clarify the tree protection proposals. The arboricultural officer has confirmed that the tree protection measures are acceptable, and the extension will not have a significant impact upon the woodland as whole.

The proposal will also require the removal of six young Silver Birch trees planted in the field. These trees are of limited amenity value and any tree losses can be adequately mitigated. Details of replacement planting to mitigate for the loss of these trees is indicated on the draft landscape scheme. However, a more detailed landscape scheme is required and can be secured by condition.

Ecology

The application is supported by an acceptable Phase One habitat survey and GCN survey. The nature conservation officer is satisfied that there are unlikely to be any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development.

Amenity

Local Plan policies H13 and DC3 seek to protect the amenity of residential occupiers. Policy DC3 states that development should not significantly injure the amenities of adjoining or nearby residential property due to matters such as loss of privacy, overbearing effect, loss of sunlight and daylight, traffic generation and car parking and noise. H13 simply seeks to protect the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining or nearby houses.

The application site is bordered to west by residential properties on Broadway and Covington Place to the north. The properties on Broadway will be over 80 metres from the extension with substantial intervening vegetation, and Covington Place over 110 metres away. Having regard to these distances no significant residential amenity concerns are raised.

Highways

The Strategic Highways Manager has commented on the proposal and stated that it is clear from the application detail that there will be no increase in staff or student numbers arising from this proposal. This means that any additional traffic generation will be of no material concern locally. He also refers to the comments of the Town Council and neighbours relating to the local aspiration for improved pedestrian links to the town centre. However, as the footfall will not materially change the Strategic Highways Manager does not feel justified in requiring this improvement as it relates to the existing operation rather than the proposed development. No significant highway safety issues are therefore raised.

It is also noted that the site is within walking / cycling distance of the town centre and public transport options. Therefore there are clearly alternatives to the private car for users of this site.

Other considerations

Environmental Health have commented on the proposal and noted that this site is within 250m of a known landfill site or area of ground that has the potential to create gas. The contaminated land report submitted with the application recommends that an intrusive

investigation is required. The contaminated land officer recommends that contamination and ground gas risks be considered as part of the investigation. A condition requiring the submission of a phase II survey is therefore recommended.

Having further regard to the comments from local residents, the suggested impact of construction vehicles upon the living conditions of neighbours is acknowledged, and a condition requiring a construction method statement is recommended to ensure the impact upon neighbouring properties is minimised as much as possible.

The comments regarding the non-compliance with condition 21 on 03/0543P requiring the provision of a pedestrian route through the northern boundary of the school are also noted. This outstanding matter is unrelated to the current proposal, and will be re-examined through normal enforcement processes.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The proposed extension is not considered to harm the integrity of the existing open space, and accords with policy RT1 of the Local Plan and relevant open space requirements within the Framework. The design and layout of the extension is generally acceptable, in keeping with the existing building, and does not have a significant impact upon the character of the area, the amenity of neighbouring properties or highway safety. The submitted surveys indicate that there will not be any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development, and the tree protection detail ensures that there will not be any significant impact upon trees of amenity value, with any tree losses being adequately mitigated by replacement planting. Therefore, for the reasons outlined above a recommendation of approval is made, subject to conditions.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A02EX - Submission of samples of building materials
4. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
6. A32HA - Submission of construction method statement
7. A22GR - Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
8. Development in accordance with tree report and tree protection drawing
9. Phase II contaminated land survey to be submitted
10. Development carried out in accordance with tree report and tree protection details / drawings



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