

Application No: 15/3562N

Location: THE STABLES, WARMINGHAM ROAD, CREWE, CHESHIRE, CW1 4PP

Proposal: Change of use and temporary classroom

Applicant: Mr Alan Jackson, Cheshire East Council

Expiry Date: 29-Sep-2015

CONCLUSION:

The proposal will contribute to economic and social sustainability through the provision of improved educational facilities. In terms of environmental sustainability, the proposal would be acceptable in terms of amenity design and highways, it is not considered that a refusal on these grounds could be sustained and that any concerns in this regard are outweighed by the economic and social benefits of the proposal and the environmental benefits of bringing a vacant site back into use. The scheme, it is considered to represent sustainable development and is in accordance with the relevant policies of the development and accordingly it is recommended for approval.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to conditions

REASON FOR REPORT:

The applicant is Cheshire East Council and the proposal is subject to objection.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The application relates to a single storey former stable building of brick construction with a tiled roof. To the rear of this is an existing temporary classroom. The site also includes a MUGA pitch and parking areas to the front of the building. The site was last used as a school occupied by the Willowview Education Trust (Plymouth Brethren).

PROPOSAL:

It is proposed to use the site as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). PRU's are Department for Education (DFE) registered educational schools that are managed by local authorities and subject to regular inspections by Ofsted. They support a wide range of school aged young people in centres outside mainstream school but often work closely in partnership with groups of schools and other agencies.

The relocation of the PRU to the site will facility the redevelopment of the Oakley Centre in Crewe for use as a University Technical College (UTC).

The previous school had around 30 occupants. The number of proposed will be similar to the previous occupant and that there are no anticipated implications for increased traffic etc.

The PRU would be used for teaching purposes and would operate within normal hours of the school day.

It is also proposed to located a temporary classroom within the grounds.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

(2002) Change of use From Stables to Education Centre

(2007) Rear Extension to Existing Education Centre

(2008) Variation of Condition One of Planning Application P07/0159

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Development Plan:

Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan:

BE.1 (Amenity)

BE.2 (Design Standards)

BE.3 (Access and Parking)

BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)

BE.5 (Infrastructure)

TRAN.1 (Public Transport)

TRAN.3 (Pedestrians)

TRAN.4 (Access for the Disabled)

TRAN.5 (Provision for Cyclists)

TRAN.6 (Cycle Routes)

TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards)

The saved Local Plan policies are consistent with the NPPF and should be given full weight.

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

As the examination of this plan has now been suspended, its policies carry limited weight. The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

Policy MP 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
Policy SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles
Policy EG 1 Economic Prosperity
Policy SE 1 Design
Policy CO 1 Sustainable Travel and Transport
Policy CO 4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

CONSULTATIONS:

Environmental Health: Having looked at the application the current use of the site is a school and Environmental Health have not received any complaints or investigated any issues, hence as the proposed use is to remain as a school with no increase numbers, EH have no concerns with the application. Therefore EH have no objection and would recommend that previous conditions are transferred to this current application.

Informatives are suggested in relation to construction hours and contaminated land.

REPRESENTATIONS:

One objection has been received from the occupier of 121 Warmingham Road making the following points:

- The occupants of 121 Warmingham Road will be the most affected by this proposal
- Concerns regarding security
- Parts of the boundary fence are to be increased to 3m in heights and the existing fencing to the boundary will not provide sufficient security
- The pupils attending will have behavioural issues
- There are concerns over the safety and vulnerability of occupants and dogs at 121 Warmingham Road
- Potential trespassing issues
- Previous pupils on this site have thrown objects over the existing boundary fence
- Noise and disturbance
- Police are regularly in attendance at the existing PRU
- Increased traffic
- Impact upon privacy
- Financial impact

APPRAISAL:

Principle of Development

Planning permission was granted in 2002 for the use of the site as a school. The previous permission was subject to a condition restricting use of the site to the Plymouth Brethren. Therefore, Cheshire East cannot operate the school under the existing permission, hence the requirement for this planning application. The application has been submitted as a full application rather than a variation of condition, as a temporary classroom is also proposed which requires full planning permission.

Nevertheless, the principle of the use of the site as a school has been established and the main issues in the consideration of the application, are the acceptability of it's operation by Cheshire East and the siting of the classroom.

Environmental Sustainability

Access

Whilst the comments of local residents are noted, the principle of the use has been previously established and the operation of the site by Cheshire East is not anticipated to generated any parking requirements or traffic generation over and above the existing.

In the absence of any objection from the Head of Strategic Infrastructure, it is not considered that a refusal on highways grounds could be sustained.

Design

The proposed conversion of the existing school building involves internal works with the exception of the re-opening of a single external doorway. These will have no impact on the overall appearance of the building or the area generally.

The proposed temporary classroom is a single storey mobile building. Whilst this is utilitarian in nature, there is an existing temporary classroom on the site and as it is a temporary structure it is considered to be acceptable in terms of design.

The building would be located alongside the former stables, set back from the road, behind the front building line of the property. Consequently, it will be discretely sited, and despite its lack of architectural merit it will have little impact on the character and appearance of the street scene or the wider rural area.

Amenity

The surrounding development comprises open fields to north east, north west and south east. There is one neighbouring residential property to the south west which sits on the end of a row of ribbon development on the western side of Warmingham Road.

Concerns have been raised by neighbouring occupiers regarding privacy, noise and security.

With regard to privacy, there would be no greater overlooking of neighbouring properties from the existing buildings or school grounds as is the case presently. In respect of the proposed building, as this is single storey it is considered that the existing boundary treatments, which comprise a mix of tall conifer hedges and 2m high closed boarded fencing would be sufficient to prevent any issues.

Furthermore, the proposed building would be located on the north east side of the existing stables building, adjacent to the open countryside. In this location it would be screened from the neighbouring dwelling by the stables building, and sufficient distance would be maintained from the nearest residential property to avoid any loss of light.

Turning to the issue of security, the concerns regarding the behaviour of pupils have been raised with the Council's education department, the applicant, who have commented that Pupil Referral Units are a type of alternative schooling provision and local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for pupils who because of illness or other reasons would not receive suitable education without such provision. This applies to all children of compulsory school age resident in the local authority area.

PRU's are schools, and therefore, pupils are subject to at least the same level of supervision that would be expected in a mainstream school. Also, the proposal makes some provision for increased fencing heights.

Furthermore, in land use planning terms there is no distinction between a mainstream school and a school catering for any form of special educational needs and under the terms of the extant permission the previous occupier could have, if they so wished, used the school for the education of pupils with special needs.

In the absence of any objection from the Environmental Health Department, it is not considered that a refusal on the grounds of noise could be sustained.

Landscape & Trees

The proposed development would result in the removal of one small tree which has limited value. There is a mature hedge and trees on the northern boundary. The proposed additional parking may encroach into the rooting area of a mature Ash tree. In the event of approval, the Landscape Officer suggests a no dig construction should be required for surfacing of this area. A specification could be sought by condition. It may also be advisable to seek protective fencing for retained vegetation during the course of development. This could be secured by condition.

Social Sustainability

The proposal will improve education provision both for pupils attending the PRU and in facilitating the development of the UTC in the town centre.

Economic Sustainability

The development of the UTC is an important aspect of economic regeneration in Crewe,

S106 contributions:

No Section 106 contributions will be necessary for this development.

Other Matters

Neighbours have raised concerns about impact on property values. However, this is not a material planning consideration.

Planning Balance

The proposal will contribute to economic and social sustainability through the provision of improved educational facilities. In terms of environmental sustainability, the proposal would be acceptable in terms of amenity design and highways, it is not considered that a refusal on these grounds could be sustained and that any concerns in this regard are outweighed by the economic and social benefits of the proposal and the environmental benefits of bringing a vacant site back into use. The scheme, it is considered to represent sustainable development and is in accordance with the relevant policies of the development and accordingly it is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

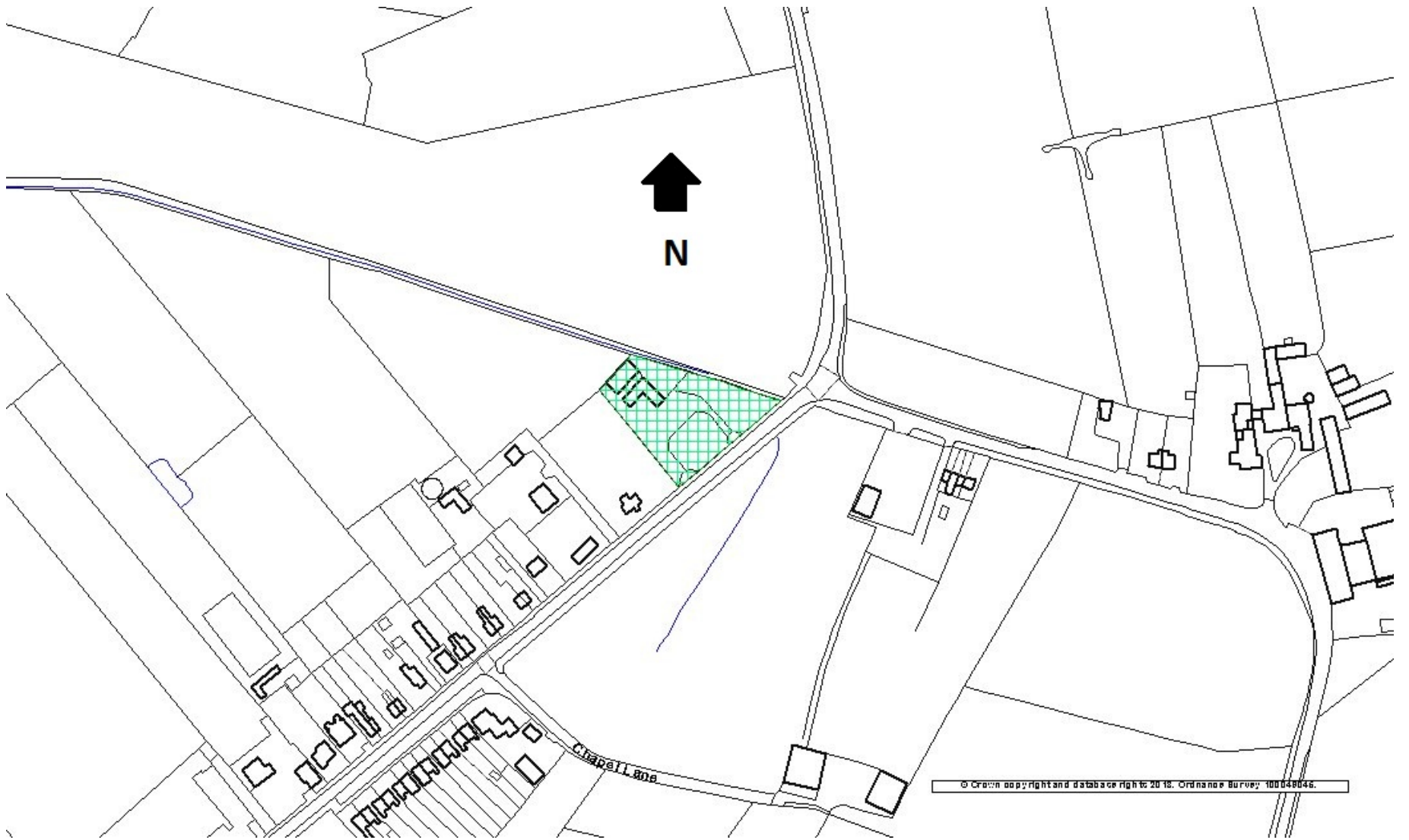
APPROVE subject to the following conditions.

1. **Standard**
2. **Temporary permission for 3 years.**
3. **Site shall be used for an Education Centre / School / Pupil Referral Unit and for no other purpose whatsoever (including any other purpose(s) in Class D1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.**
4. **Shall not be used for teaching purposes between 6pm and 8am**
5. **Special construction techniques for hardstanding under trees.**
6. **Tree protection Scheme**
7. **Implementation of Tree Protection**

Informatives:

1. **Hours of construction**
2. **Contaminated Land**

In order to give proper effect to the Board's/Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation), in consultation with the Chair (or in her absence the Vice Chair) of Southern Planning Committee, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.



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