

Planning and Regulatory Committee
19 May 2015

8. PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF A 2 CLASSROOM EXTENSION, TOGETHER WITH A NEW HARD PLAY AREA, NEW CAR PARKING AREA AND REINSTATEMENT OF PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AT MILLFIELDS FIRST SCHOOL, SWIFT CLOSE, BROMSGROVE, WORCESTERSHIRE.

Applicant	Worcestershire County Council
Local Councillor	Mr L C R Mallett
Purpose of Report	<p>1. To consider an application under Regulation 3 of the Town and County Planning General Regulations 1992 for planning permission for the proposed construction of a 2 classroom extension, together with a new hard play area, new car parking area and reinstatement of pedestrian access at Millfields First School, Swift Close, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.</p>
Background	<p>2. Millfields First School currently has a capacity for 225 pupils which includes 5 year groups from Reception to Year 4. Due to the increased demand for places, Worcestershire County Council wish to increase the capacity of the school from a 1.5 Form Entry to a 2 Form Entry First School, increasing the capacity to 300 pupils.</p>
The Proposal	<p>3. Worcestershire County Council is seeking planning permission for the proposed construction of a 2 classroom extension, together with a new hard play area, new car parking area and reinstatement of pedestrian access at Millfields First School, Swift Close, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.</p> <p>Proposed 2 classroom extension</p> <p>4. The proposed classroom extension would be single-storey and would measure approximately 190 square metres.</p> <p>5. Due to the sloping topography of the site, the potential to add two new classrooms is very limited and for this reason the new classrooms and associated accommodation would be separated from the existing building, sited at the rear of the school on an area of sloping ground that is currently underused currently due to its natural gradient.</p> <p>6. The new block would comprise of two new classrooms,</p>

pupil toilets, cloak areas, stores, main entrance lobby and disabled/staff toilet.

7. Given that the proposed classroom block is to be sited on an area of sloping ground, the intention is to build partially into the bank and form a ramped access to the south to facilitate disabled access into the new block.

8. The applicant states that the single-storey extension has been designed to complement the existing building, with pavilion style architecture complementing the latest classroom extension built in the year 2000. The proposed classroom block would be constructed from buff facing brickwork to complement the extension built in the year 2000 with a sedum/green roof; aluminium doors and windows.

9. The proposed block would be slightly rotated from the axis of the main school to maximise the exposure to daylight on the south elevation. The levels allow for natural terracing on the south side which would be used as outdoor teaching space.

10. The proposal would comprise of regrading the steep sloping grass to the west of the proposed building. The line of trees sited to the west would be affected by this restructure.

11. The block would measure approximately 23 metres in length by approximately 11 metres in width by approximately 6 metres high.

12. The construction traffic would utilise the existing school vehicular access into the site via Swift Close.

13. The applicant intends to use sustainable urban drainage strategies, subject to the suitability of the ground conditions.

Proposed construction of car park

14. There is limited car parking on the school site. It is, therefore, proposed to construct a small car park capable of accommodating 8 cars, measuring approximately 21 metres in length by 11 metres in width. The proposed car park would be sited on a redundant area of grass and part of the Caretaker's garden, no. 10 Swift Close. A section of the hedgerow along the boundary between the grassed area and no. 10 Swift Close would also be removed to accommodate the proposed car park.

15. A new close boarded fence would be erected on the boundary of the school and no. 10 Swift Close.

Proposed reinstatement of pedestrian access

16. The proposal includes work to the existing disused access to the north of the school site. It is proposed to erect a fenced and gated secure access, which would be managed by the school.

The Site

17. The applicant anticipates that the reinstatement of this access would alleviate some of the parking issues on Swift Close by giving an alternative pedestrian route into the school at busy times of the day.
18. There are no internal alterations proposed to the existing building.
19. The school site is sited within a residential area located south-east of Bromsgrove town centre.
20. The internal floor area measures 1,235 square metres.
21. The school site is bound by Swift Close to the south; residential curtilages sited along Fox Lane to the west; along Millfields Road to the north and along Dovecote Road to the east.
22. The existing boundary treatments at the site consists of hedgerow to the north; wire mesh and concrete pillar fencing to the east; hedgerow to the west and approximately 1 metre high bow top fencing to the south.
23. The original school building was constructed in the 1970s with the latest classroom extension being constructed in 2000.
24. The building currently comprises of a hall, classrooms, staff room, offices, kitchen, toilets and store rooms. There is a generous forest school area on the west side of the site.
25. The school buildings and hard play areas are located at the front of the site. The rear of the site is primarily grass and used for informal play.
26. There is a cluster of trees sited at the north-eastern corner of the school and a line of trees sited approximately 4 metres south-west of the proposed extension. The trees would be retained.
27. There is one existing vehicular access into the school site, located at the south of the school site off Swift Close. There is one existing pedestrian access into the school site which is also located along the southern boundary. The existing pedestrian access and vehicular accesses into the site would remain unchanged.
28. The nearest residential properties to the proposal are no. 8 and no. 10 Swift Close, which are sited within 10 metres from the proposed car park and no. 55 and no. 57 Millfield Road, which are sited approximately 30 metres from the proposed extension.
29. The proposed development is sited approximately 460 metres east of East Lodge & Breakback Hill, a local wildlife site.
30. There is limited on-site parking at the school site and,

therefore, staff and parents park on the streets and the roads surrounding the site. There is an agreement with the neighbouring Social Club, which is located along Millfield Road, for staff to park their vehicles during the school day.

31. The topography of the site slopes from west to east to the rear of the school site.

32. There is an existing disused access to the north of the school site which is currently overgrown.

33. The main issues in the determination of this application are the impact of the proposal on:

- Landscape Character and Appearance of the Area
- Residential Amenity
- Water Environment
- Traffic and Highways Safety
- Ecology and Biodiversity and
- Playing Field.

Summary of Issues

Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

34. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and came into effect on 27 March 2012. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision takers and is a material planning consideration in determining planning applications. Annex 3 of the NPPF lists the documents revoked and replaced by the NPPF. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through plan-making and decision-taking.

35. Sustainable Development is defined by five principles set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy:

- "living within the planet's environmental limits;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance; and
- using sound science responsibly".

36. The Government believes that sustainable development can play three critical roles in England:

- an economic role, contributing to a strong, responsive, competitive economy;
- a social role, supporting vibrant and healthy communities; and
- an environmental role, protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

37. The following guidance contained in the NPPF, is considered to be of specific relevance to the determination of this planning application:

- Section 7: Requiring good design
- Section 8: Promoting healthy communities
- Section 10: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The Development Plan

38. The Development Plan is the strategic framework that guides land use planning for the area. In this respect the current Development Plan consists of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and the Draft Bromsgrove District Local Plan.

39. Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

40. Annex 1 of the NPPF states that for the purposes of decision-taking, the policies in the Local Plan should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the NPPF. However, the policies contained within the NPPF are material considerations. For 12 months from the day of publication, decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited degree of conflict with the NPPF. In other cases and following this 12-month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

Bromsgrove District Local Plan

Policy DS13: Sustainable Development

Policy S31: Development at Educational Establishments

Policy C17: Retention of Existing Trees

Policy BG3: Improvements to Car Parking Provision

Draft Planning Policy

Draft Bromsgrove District Plan

41. The Draft Bromsgrove District Plan will outline the strategic planning policy framework for guiding development in Bromsgrove District up to 2030. It will contain a long-term vision and strategic objectives, a development strategy, key policies, strategic site allocations and a monitoring and implementation statement. The Plan will also include a copy of the Redditch Cross Boundary Development Policy (Policy RCBD1), which appears in the Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4.

42. On 12 March 2014 Bromsgrove District Council submitted the Bromsgrove District Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The Secretary of State has appointed an independent Inspector (Mr Michael J

Hetherington) to undertake an independent examination into the soundness of the Bromsgrove District Plan. The Bromsgrove District Plan and the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 examinations are being held concurrently and have included several joint hearing sessions as well as separate hearing sessions relating to each Local Plan. Hearing sessions commenced in June 2014 and the Inspector published his Interim conclusions on 17 July 2014 in respect of the Duty to Co-operate, the objective assessment of housing needs and consideration of additional housing needs arising from the West Midlands conurbation. On 1 September 2014 Bromsgrove District Council submitted their response to Inspector's Interim Conclusions. Further hearings were held in December 2014; and a further hearing session regarding cross boundary development is scheduled for 17 June 2015.

43. The Bromsgrove District Plan has not, therefore, been tested at examination or adopted by Bromsgrove District Council. Having regard to the advice in the NPPF, Annex 1, it is the view of the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy, that little weight will be attached to the Draft Bromsgrove District Plan in the determination of this application. The Bromsgrove District Plan policies that are relevant to this planning application are listed below:-

Policy BDP 1: Sustainable Development Principles

Policy BDP 12: Sustainable Communities

Policy BDP 19: High Quality Design

Policy BDP 21: Natural Environment

Policy BDP 23: Water Management

Consultations

44. Bromsgrove District Council - no comments received.

45. County Councillor Luke Mallett recognises the importance of creating additional school places in the area, however, raises concerns about the parking provision at the school. He considers that there are already issues around drop-off and pick-up times together with staff parking along the nearby residential roads.

46. He welcomes the proposed provision of additional parking spaces for staff but feels that more spaces are needed or additional measures within the scheme or some sort of formalisation of the arrangements with the adjoining social club.

47. He also raises concerns about the proposed reinstatement of the pedestrian footpath linking the school with Millfields Road in relation to potential issues with parents using this road as a vehicular drop-off point.

48. Severn Trent Water has no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of a condition relating to drainage plans.

49. Sport England does not wish to comment on the planning application.

50. Worcestershire Regulatory Services has no comments to make from a nuisance point of view.

51. It acknowledges that the site is located within 250m of three significant areas of unknown filled ground (former quarries) that may be producing landfill gas. Worcestershire Regulatory Services would, therefore, recommend that the applicant considers incorporating matching landfill gas protection measures within the foundations of the proposed extension(s), so as not to compromise any existing gas protection measures which may have been installed in the existing building to ensure that the risks to buildings and their occupants from landfill sites are adequately addressed. If the existing building has no protection measures currently there is no need to install gas protection measures within the proposed extension.

52. The County Archaeologist confirms that there will be no impact to the Historic Environment in this particular area.

53. The County Ecologist has no objections to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the protection of trees, bats and birds and the provision of biodiversity enhancements.

54. The County Highways Officer has no objections subject to the imposition of a condition relating to the provision of a travel plan.

55. North Worcestershire Water Management acknowledges that although the site falls entirely within flood zone 1 (low risk of fluvial flooding) and is not shown to be susceptible to surface water flooding, the adjacent roads may be susceptible. It has no objections to the proposal; however, they request that a condition is imposed on any planning consent, relating to storm drainage, including the use of SuDS, for the building and new hard standing areas.

56. The County Landscape Officer supports the planning application in general, however, raises concerns that no details regarding external surface water drainage or landscaping has been submitted and therefore, recommends that conditions are imposed relating to the use of SuDS and accompanying planting plan.

57. She also raises concerns about the potential impact the proposed ground modelling would have on the mature trees within the site. The proposed scheme shows the ground graded back which would reduce the levels around the mature pine and larch trees and may destroy much of their root system leading to either their death or rendering them unstable. She considers that a structural retaining solution is required around the south-western side of the new build to retain the existing steep slope.

Other Representations

The Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy's comments

58. Worcestershire Wildlife Trust does not wish to object to the proposed development and are content to defer to the County Ecologist for all on-site biodiversity issues.

59. In accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order 2010, the application has been advertised on site and through neighbour notification letters. There have been two letters of representation received from local residents objecting to the proposal. The letters of representation are available in the Members Support Unit. The local residents states that they already have concerns with the current parking situation at the school for the following issues:

- Parents and staff park inconsiderately along Swift Close, Dovecote Road and Martin Close
- Coach parking can also be an issue when the children are being picked up and dropped off for school trips.

60. They are concerned that by increasing the size of the school and the pupil capacity, vehicular traffic would increase, worsening the parking situation in the area.

61. As with any planning application, this application should be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant policies and key issues have been set out earlier.

62. Worcestershire County Council is seeking planning permission for the proposed construction of a 2 classroom extension, together with a new hard play area, new car parking area and reinstatement of pedestrian access at Millfields First School, Swift Close, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

Landscape Character and Appearance of the Area

63. The proposed extension would be sited to the rear of the school site but would be glimpsed from public view along Dovecote Road.

64. The proposed classroom block would be constructed from buff facing brickwork to complement the extension built in the year 2000 with a sedum/green roof and aluminium doors and windows.

65. The tarmacadam car park would be constructed at the front of the school building, however, it would be screened from public view by the adjacent residential property, no. 10 Swift Close. The area where the car park is proposed is currently a redundant grassed area located at the front of the school buildings. The proposed car park would also encompass part of no. 10 Swift Close.

66. A new close boarded fence would be erected on the

boundary of the school and no. 10 Swift Close.

67. The proposal would comprise of regrading the steep sloping grass to the west of the proposed building. The line of trees sited to the west would be affected by this restructure.

68. The County Landscape Officer has requested that the applicant revises the proposed ground modelling in order to protect the existing larch and pine trees located to the north-west of the school site. She suggests that a structural retaining solution is required around the south-western side of the new build to retain the existing steep slope.

69. Given the size, siting and design of the proposed development the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposal would have no adverse impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area, subject to the imposition of conditions relating to a landscaping scheme and a scheme to protect the existing larch and pine trees, located to the north-west of the school site in accordance with Policy C17 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and conditions relating to facing brick of the proposed extension and surfacing of the proposed car park.

Residential Amenity

70. Public notices were erected around the site to advertise the proposal and neighbour notification letters were delivered to the nearest residential dwellings. The school is surrounded by residential properties, but the nearest residential properties to the proposal are no. 8 and no. 10 Swift Close, which are sited within 10 metres from the proposed car park and no. 55 and no. 57 Millfield Road, which are sited approximately 30 metres from the proposed extension.

71. Two letters of representation have been received from local residents objecting to the proposal. Their concerns, relate to the current parking situation at the school, in which they state that parents and staff park inconsiderately along Swift Close, Dovecote Road and Martin Close. They add that coach parking can also be an issue when the children are being picked up and dropped off for school trips. They consider that by increasing the size of the school and the pupil capacity there will be an increase in vehicular traffic by additional parents, thus making the parking situation worse.

72. Worcestershire Regulatory Services have no comments to make from a nuisance point of view.

73. In view of the above, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is, therefore, satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable on residential amenity grounds.

Water Environment

74. The application site is not located in an area at risk of flooding.

75. The applicant states that the preferred approach is to

retain surface water on site using recognised sustainable urban drainage strategies (SuDs) subject to the suitability of ground conditions. A condition has been imposed relating to details of the proposed SuDS scheme.

76. The applicant states that the proposed car park would be constructed from a porous tarmacadam to limit the surface water to be discharged off the site.

77. Severn Trent Water Ltd has no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of a condition relating to drainage plans.

78. Subject to the imposition of a condition relating to drainage, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposed development would have no adverse impact on the water environment.

Traffic and Highways Safety

79. Two letters of representation have been received from local residents, objecting to the proposal on highways grounds. The local residents already have concerns with the current parking situation at the school, in which parents and staff are parking inconsiderately along Swift Close, Dovecote Road and Martin Close. They add that coach parking can also be an issue when the children are being picked up and dropped off for school trips. They consider that by increasing the size of the school and the pupil capacity there will be an increase in vehicular traffic by additional parents, thus making the parking situation worse.

80. The County Highways Officer has considered the above and is satisfied that there would be no adverse impact on highways safety subject to the imposition of a condition relating to the provision of a travel plan.

81. In view of this, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposal is acceptable on highways grounds.

Ecology and Biodiversity

82. There is a cluster of trees sited at the north-eastern corner of the school and a line of trees sited approximately 4 metres south-west of the proposed extension. The trees would be retained.

83. The County Ecologist has no objections to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the protection of trees, bats and birds and the installation of biodiversity enhancements.

84. Subject to the imposition of conditions relating to biodiversity enhancements and the protection of protected species, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposed development would have no detrimental impact on the biodiversity of the site and the

surrounding area.

Other Matters

Playing field

85. The proposed classroom extension would be sited over a grassed area of steep sloping land. The area is currently used as play space for the pupils. Sport England was consulted on the proposal and they do not wish to comment on the planning application.

Conclusion

86. On balance, taking into account the comments received from statutory consultees; members of the public and the provisions of the development plan in particular, Policies DS13; S31; C17 and BG3 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan, it is considered that the proposal would not cause demonstrable harm to the interests intended to be protected by these policies or highway safety.

87. Given the size, siting and design of the proposed development the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposal would have no adverse impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area, subject to the imposition of conditions relating to a landscaping scheme and a scheme to protect the existing larch and pine trees, located to the north-west of the school site in accordance with Policy C17 of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan and conditions relating to facing brick of the proposed extension and surfacing of the proposed car park.

88. The Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is, therefore, satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable on residential amenity grounds.

89. The Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposed development would have no adverse impact on the water environment.

90. Subject to the imposition of a condition relating to the provision of a travel plan, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposal would have no adverse impact on highways safety.

91. The Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy is satisfied that the proposed development would have no detrimental impact on the biodiversity of the site and the surrounding area.

Recommendation

92. The Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy recommends that planning permission be granted for the proposed construction of a 2 classroom extension, together with a new hard play area, new car parking area and reinstatement of pedestrian access at Millfields First School, Swift Close, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, subject to the following conditions:

a) The permission enures for the benefit of

Worcestershire County Council only;

- b) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission;**
- c) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on submitted Drawing Numbers: P01; P02; P03 Rev A and P04, except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission;**

Details

- d) Notwithstanding any indication of the materials, which may have been given in this application, prior to the construction of the extension hereby approved, a schedule and/or samples of the materials and finishes for the development shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details;**
- e) No development shall take place until a schedule and or samples of all surfacing materials has been submitted and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details;**
- f) No development shall take place until full details of the boundary walls and fences and other means of enclosure have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority. This shall include the method of construction for any fencing that falls within 5 metres of any protected tree. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details;**

Drainage

- g) The development hereby permitted shall not commence until drainage plans for the disposal of foul sewage have been submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is first brought into use;**
- h) No development shall take place until a full surface water drainage scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the approved surface water drainage scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details;**

Landscaping

- i) Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved**

a landscaping scheme, which shall include the retention of any existing trees and hedgerows and details of all walls, fences, surface treatments, new trees, shrubs and other planting, and details of the proposed planting species, sizes, spacing, densities, locations, planting methods and details of the provision of adequate growing medium and drainage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details within 6 months of the completion of the development. Any new trees or shrubs, which within a period of five years from the completion of the planting die, are removed, or become damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species;

- j) A scheme to protect the existing larch and pine trees, located to the north-west of the school site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. This scheme shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details;

Ecology & Biodiversity

- k) Within 3 months from the date of this planning permission, details of one nest box and one hedgehog dome, including the location and specifications shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority; The nest box and the hedgehog dome shall be installed in accordance with approved details before the development first comes into use.
- l) In the unlikely event that any protected species are found on the site during the works then all works must cease immediately and the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist must be sought prior to works recommencing;
- m) All vegetation clearance at the site shall be undertaken outside the bird nesting season which generally extends between March and September inclusive. If this is not possible then any vegetation that is to be removed or disturbed should be checked by an experienced Ecologist for nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing. If birds are found to be nesting any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally.

Highways

- n) The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the applicant has submitted to and had approved in writing by the County Planning Authority a travel plan that promotes sustainable forms of access to the site. The approved plan shall be implemented and updated in agreement with

Worcestershire County Council's Travel plan co-ordinator; and

Construction

- o) Construction works shall only be carried out on the site between 08:00 to 18:00 hours on Mondays to Fridays inclusive, and 08:00 to 13:00 hours on Saturdays, with no construction work on Sundays or Bank Holidays.**

Contacts

Contact Points for this Report

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List of Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Strategic Infrastructure and Economy) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this item:

The application, plans and consultation replies in file reference 15/000009/REG3.