

Planning and Regulatory Committee
20 May 2014

7. APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE CARRYING-OUT OF DEVELOPMENT PURSUANT TO PLANNING PERMISSION REFERENCE NUMBER 603451 DATED 28 FEBRUARY 2007 WITHOUT COMPLYING WITH CONDITION 2 OF THAT PERMISSION SO AS TO ALLOW THE RETENTION OF 14 TEMPORARY CLASSROOMS FOR TWO YEARS AT WOLVERLEY C OF E SECONDARY SCHOOL, BLAKESHALL LANE, WOLVERLEY, KIDDERMINSTER, WORCESTERSHIRE

Applicant	Worcestershire County Council
Local Councillor	Mr G C Yarranton
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 carrying out of development pursuant to planning permission reference number 603451 dated 28 February 2007 without complying with condition 2 of that permission so as to allow the retention of 14 temporary classrooms for two years at Wolverley C of E Secondary School, Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcestershire.</p>
Background Information	<p>2. The 14 temporary classrooms were erected on site in 2007 to accommodate 428 additional pupils and enable the school to change from a High School to a 7 Form Entry Secondary School. At the time, it was anticipated that permanent accommodation would be funded through the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. Outline planning permission for the re-development of Wolverley Secondary School on this site (County Planning Application Reference Number: 10/000004/REG3) was granted by the Planning and Regulatory Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2010 (Minute 692 refers). However, funding for the school redevelopment through the BSF programme was withdrawn by the Government.</p> <p>3. Since then pupil numbers at the school have declined which has created the potential for all of the pupils to be</p>

accommodated within the existing permanent buildings. In order to achieve this, a programme of refurbishment and remodelling of the existing school buildings is required. It is anticipated that this work would be completed within two years.

The Proposal

4. In order to maintain the level of accommodation required while this project is implemented, the school need to retain the temporary classrooms on site, and will decant various functions into the temporary classrooms to enable spaces within the existing school to be upgraded.

5. Worcestershire County Council is seeking planning permission to vary condition 2 of the existing planning consent so as to allow the 14 mobile classrooms to remain on site for a further 2 years at Wolverley C of E Secondary School, Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcestershire.

6. 12 of the 14 temporary classrooms are located as one block and measure approximately 72 metres by 22 metres by 3 metres high. Toilet and cloakroom facilities are provided within the block and there is a central shared raised platform area with ramped accesses into the classrooms.

7. The remaining 2 of the 14 temporary classrooms is a double mobile classroom and measures approximately 18 metres by 8 metres by 3 metres high. The double mobile classroom has a disabled toilet and a changing room, and there is a stepped and ramped access into the classroom.

8. The 14 temporary classrooms are painted green in colour.

The Site

9. Wolverley Secondary School is located on the northern edge of the village of Wolverley, on the western side of Blakeshall Lane. The site is bound by open fields to the north; Blakeshall Lane to the east; Drakelow Lane to the south and woodland to the west.

10. The whole site is within the Green Belt and Wolverley Conservation Area and there are several buildings within the School grounds which are considered as being of local interest.

11. The boundary treatments at the school site consist of open fields on higher ground to the north; shrubbery and post and rail timber fence to the east; mature trees and hedging to the south and a line of mature trees to the west.

12. 12 of the 14 temporary classrooms are located as one block to the north of the main school building and the remaining 2 of the 14 temporary classrooms are located as one block to the south of the main school building.

13. The block of 12 classrooms are sited approximately 97 metres south-west of the nearest residential properties; New Cottages, Blakeshall Lane. The classrooms are set at a lower level than the adjacent field and allied with the siting and design of the blocks; it is considered that there is minimal impact on

Summary of Issues

Policy

the character and appearance of the area.

14. The block of 2 classrooms is set in the context of mature trees and shrubbery allied with the green coloured finish, creating a minimal impact on the landscape setting. The classrooms are sited approximately 140 metres north-east of the nearest residential properties; Drakelow Lane.

15. The application site is accessed via the existing School access along Blakeshall Lane.

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

- Green Belt;
- Listed Building and Conservation Area and;
- Residential Amenity.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

17. 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.

18. 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".

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

- Section 7: Requiring good design
- Section 8: Promoting healthy communities
- Section 9: Protecting Green Belt land

The Development Plan

20. 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 adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan, Wyre Forest District Core Strategy and the Wyre Forest District Council Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document. 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.

21. 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).

Wyre Forest Local Plan (Saved Policies)

Policy GB.1: Control of Development in the Green Belt

Policy GB.2: Development in the Green Belt

Policy CA.1: Development in Conservation Areas

Wyre Forest District Core Strategy (Adopted December 2010)

Policy CP02: Water Management

Policy CP03: Promoting Transport Choice and Improving Accessibility

Policy CP07: Delivering Community Wellbeing

Policy CP11 Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

Policy CP12 Landscape Character

Policy CP14 Providing Opportunities for Local Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Wyre Forest District Council Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD)

23. The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan (SAPLP) was adopted by Wyre Forest District Council on 24 July 2013. The SAPLP allocates and designates areas of land for particular uses, most notably land to deliver housing but also for other major development needs such as employment, recreation, open space and community uses, in order to meet the requirements set out in the Adopted Core Strategy. Additionally, this plan sets out important development management policies which will apply across the whole of the District and will be used for determining planning applications.

24. The SAPLP policies that are of relevance to the proposal are set out below:

Policy SAL.PFSD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy SAL.DPL11 Community Facilities

Policy SAL.DPL12 Educational Sites

Policy SAL.UP6 Safeguarding the Historic Environment

Policy SAL.UP7 Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

Consultation

25. **The County Archaeologist** confirms that the scheme is unlikely to affect any heritage assets or impact on a historic landscape and therefore has no comments to make on the proposal.

26. **Wyre Forest District Council** has no objections to the proposal.

27. **The Conservation Officer** has no objections to the scheme.

28. **The County Highways Officer** has no objections to the proposal.

29. **The County Ecologist** has no objections to the proposal.

30. **Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council** has no objections to the proposal.

Other Representations

31. In accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order 2010, the application has been advertised on site, in the local newspaper and through neighbour notification letters. No letters of representation have been received.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning's comments

32. 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.

33. Worcestershire County Council is seeking planning permission for the renewal of planning permission for 14 temporary classrooms for two years at Wolverley C of E Secondary School, Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcestershire.

34. Pupil numbers at the school have declined and therefore the pupils can be accommodated in the existing permanent school buildings. However, a programme of refurbishment and remodelling of the existing school buildings is required to make them fit for purpose and it is anticipated that this work would be completed within two years. Therefore, the applicant is applying to retain the temporary classrooms for two years which will be used to decant various functions into the temporary classrooms to enable spaces within the existing school to be refurbished.

Green Belt

35. The proposed site is located within the Green Belt.

36. The introduction to Section 9 of the NPPF states that *"the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their*

permanence. The NPPF states that Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

37. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

38. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

39. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that in accordance with the NPPF, the classrooms are buildings and therefore would require very special circumstances to be located in the Green Belt.

40. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that applicant has demonstrated a need for retaining the 14 temporary classrooms for two years to enable the refurbishment of the existing permanent school buildings which will provide permanent accommodation for the pupils and enable the mobile classrooms to be removed. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that refurbishment of the school would ensure the school remains in the pupil catchment area providing an educational facility for the community in accordance with the NPPF and retaining the mobile classrooms on site would facilitate this process.

41. In view of the above the Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that very special circumstances do exist to justify this development in the Green Belt in accordance with the NPPF, Policies GB.1 and GB.2 of the Wyre Forest Local Plan and Policy SAL.UP1 of the Wyre Forest Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

42. If members are minded to grant planning permission for this proposal, it would be a departure from the Development Plan as the proposed development would be located within the Green Belt. Under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, the County Council is required to consult the Secretary of State for Communities

and Local Government before it grants planning permission for new buildings in the Green Belt that exceed 1,000 square metres. The proposed development would be 1,049 square metres thus exceeding the 1,000 square metre threshold, and, therefore, the application would need to be referred to the Secretary of State if members are minded to approve the application for him to consider whether to call in the application for his own determination.

Listed Building and Conservation Area

43. Wolverley C of E Secondary School is located within the Wolverley Conservation Area and has several buildings within the grounds which are considered as being of local interest; including the main school house built in 1930's originally as Sebright School; Woodfield House, constructed late C18th of red brick with a hipped slate roof and portico which was extended to include additional houses in 1920's closely mimicking the style of the original house.

44. The District Conservation Officer has no objections to the proposal. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that the need for the classrooms for educational use allied with their temporary nature and sympathetic design, means that the classrooms are acceptable to retain at the site for two years and, therefore, is satisfied that retaining the mobile classrooms on site for a 2 year period will have no detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the local Conservation Area and the locally listed buildings at the school site in accordance with Policy CA.1 of the Wyre Forest Local Plan and the CP11 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy.

Landscape Character

45. The development site is bound by mature trees and fields to the north; Blakeshall Lane and residential properties to the east; woodland and Drakelow Lane to the south and fields and woodland to the west.

46. Given that the site is located within a predominantly rural area; careful consideration should be given to the design of the proposal so as to not detract from the landscape character.

47. The block of 12 classrooms is set at a lower level than the adjacent field and allied with the siting and design of the blocks; it is considered that there is minimal impact on the character and appearance of the area.

48. The block of 2 classrooms is set in the context of mature trees and shrubbery allied with the green coloured finish, creating a minimal impact on the landscape setting.

49. The classroom blocks are screened from view along the public highways running adjacent to the site; Blakeshall Lane and Drakelow Lane.

50. In view of the above, the Head of Economic Development and Planning does not consider that the proposal will have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the landscape in accordance with Policy CP12 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy.

Residential Amenity

51. Public notices were erected around the site to advertise the proposal; advertised in the local newspaper and neighbour notification letters were delivered to the nearest residential dwellings. The nearest dwellings to the 12 temporary classrooms are sited approximately 97 metres to the north east and the nearest dwellings to the 2 temporary classrooms are sited approximately 140 metres from the double mobile classroom.

52. There have been no representations made regarding the proposal.

53. The positioning of the classrooms within the school site is sympathetic to the amenity of the residents of the neighbouring properties; the block of 12 classrooms sited to the north of the main school building are set at a lower level, so that the roof of the structure is only visible to the neighbouring residential properties therefore lessening the mass of the structure. The block of 2 temporary classrooms sited to the south of the main school building is screened by mature trees and shrubbery.

54. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that there will be no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties or the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CP07 and CP11 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy.

Other Matters

55. The County Highway Officer has no objections to the proposal on highway safety grounds.

56. In view of the County Ecologists no objection, the Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that the proposal would not adversely impact ecology and biodiversity at the site.

57. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that in principle retaining the temporary classrooms for a further two years is acceptable to allow the refurbishment of the main school buildings to take place which will provide permanent accommodation for the pupils at the school.

58. The Head of Economic Development and Planning recommends that a planning condition should be attached to the planning permission limiting the retention of the 14 temporary classrooms for two years and requiring a scheme to be submitted for the reinstatement of the land.

Conclusion

59. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that very special circumstances exist to justify this development in the Green Belt in accordance with the NPPF, Policies GB.1, GB.2 of the Wyre Forest Local Plan and Policy SAL.UP1 of the Wyre Forest Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

60. In view of this, the Head of Economic Development is satisfied that the proposal will have no detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the locally listed buildings within the site in accordance with CP11 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy.

61. The Head of Economic Development and Planning does not consider that the proposal will have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the landscape in accordance with CP12 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy.

62. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that there will be no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties or the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CP07 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy.

63. On balance, taking into account the comments received from statutory consultees; members of the public and the provisions of the development plan in particular Policy GB.1; Policy GB.2 and Policy CA.1 of the Wyre Forest Local Plan; Policy CP02; Policy CP03; Policy CP07; Policy CP11; Policy CP12 and Policy CP14 of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy and Policy SAL.PFSD1; Policy SAL.DPL11; Policy SAL.DPL12; Policy SAL.UP6 and Policy SAL.UP7 of the Wyre Forest District Council Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) it is considered that the proposal would not cause demonstrable harm to the interests intended to be protected by these policies or highway safety.

Recommendation

64. The Head of Economic Development and Planning recommends that the Committee resolve that they are minded to grant planning permission for the carrying out of development pursuant to planning permission reference number 603451 dated 28 February 2007 without complying with condition 2 of that permission so as to allow the retention of 14 temporary classrooms for two years at Wolverley C of E Secondary School, Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcestershire and that the application be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Consultation)(England) Direction 2009, as the proposal is a departure from Green Belt Policy, and that if the Secretary of State does not wish to intervene planning permission be granted, subject to the following conditions:

- a) The permission enures for the benefit of Worcestershire County Council only;**

- b) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on submitted Drawing Numbers: 30101930 P01, 30101930 P02, 30101930 P03, and 30101930 P04 except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission; and
- c) Two years from the date of this permission the 14 mobile classrooms and all associated infrastructure hereby approved shall be uplifted and removed from the site. Prior to the removal of the mobile classrooms and associated infrastructure, a scheme for the reinstatement of the land on which the mobile classrooms are situated shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the land shall be reinstated in accordance with the approved scheme.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

Worcester (01905) 763763, Kidderminster (01562) 822511 or
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Specific Contact Points

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List of Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Economic Development and Planning) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

The application, plans and consultation replies in file reference 14/000008/REG3.