



Planning Committee

Report of Head of Planning and Building Control on 04 March 2021

Plans List Item Number: 2

Reason for bringing to committee

Council owned land

Application Details

Location: Watling Street Primary School, Watling Street, Brownhills, WS8 7LW

Proposal: PROPOSED 9.0M X 7.2M MODULAR BUILDING TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TEACHING SPACE, TOILETS AND ABLUTION AREA

Application Number: 20/0365

Case Officer: Gemma Meaton

Applicant: Sandra Edge

Ward: Brownhills

Agent: Denis O'Rourke

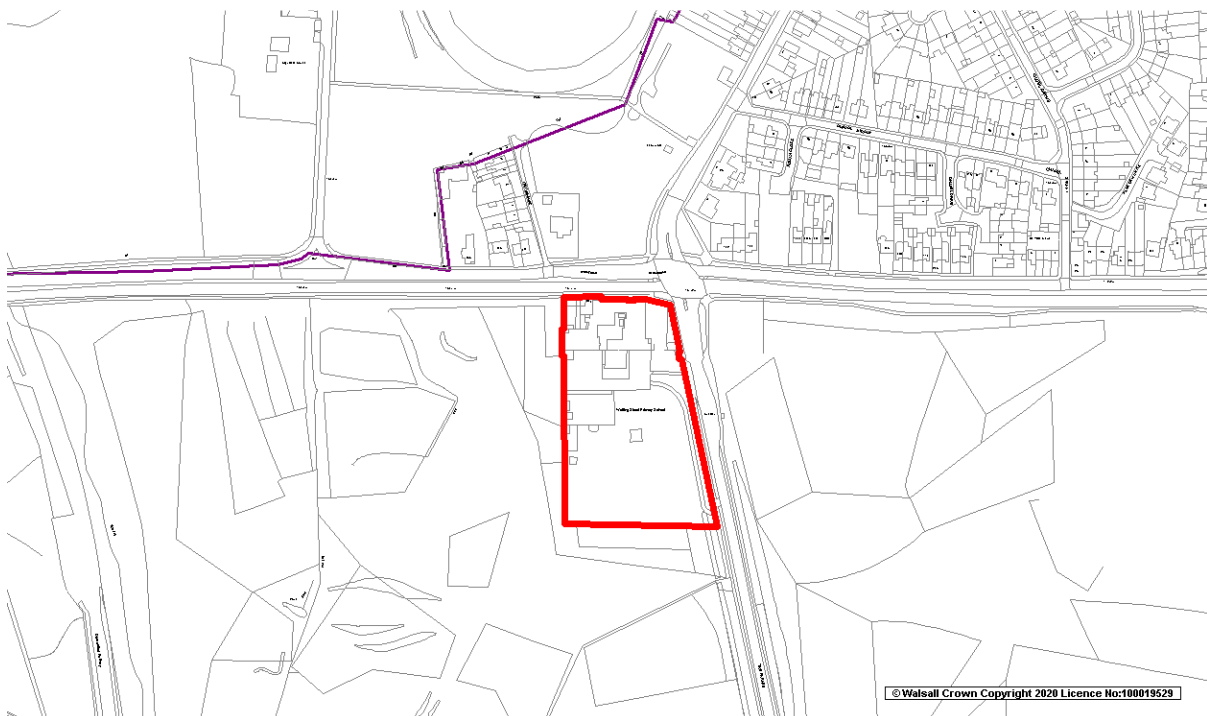
Expired Date: 21-May-2020

Application Type: Regulation 3: Minor Application (SI 1992/1492)

Time Extension Expiry: 11-Mar-2021

Recommendation

Grant Planning Permission Subject to Conditions



Officers Report

Proposal

The application proposes one modular building to provide additional teaching space and a bathroom on the site. The building would be located in the north west of the site at a minimum of approximately 4m from the boundary, on an area of existing hardstanding where there have been two containers on the site. One of these containers will be removed and the second relocated to the south as part of the application.

The building would provide an additional 64m² of teaching space. The building would be 3.2m in height and constructed using one-piece construction with plastisol-coated galvanised steel cladding. The proposed external colour scheme is Sargasso Blue (RAL 5003), with white Upvc framed windows, and a white powder coated aluminium door. The roof would be flat and would have a felted finish.

A Design and Access Statement has been provided which highlights that the school has identified the need for additional teaching space, but that there will be no increase in pupils or staff as a result of the proposal, meaning that there are no proposed changes to the parking or access arrangements.

Site and Surroundings

The site is situated on the southern side of Watling Street (A5, part of the Strategic Highway Network) on the western corner of the (traffic light controlled) junction with The Parade and comprises a primary school catering for children aged 3 – 11 years. The site is approximately 1.3 hectares in extent and has been used as a school since the 1880's.

The main school building fronts Watling Street and comprises a series of red brick Victorian buildings with pitched roofs, the buildings create a small courtyard area which is used for outdoor seating and cycle storage. A 167m² single storey, mono pitched extension to the rear of the main building was approved in 2014. The extension is constructed of a mix of both traditional and new materials with a 'blue' rendered element that separates the old and the new brickwork. At the time an external play space for the nursery/reception class was provided to the south of the extension and enclosed by 1.2m high bow top fencing.

The main vehicle access to the school is off The Parade with car parking areas to the east of the building and playground to the south with a playing field beyond.

The site is situated within the Green Belt with Brownhills Common (Holland Park SINC) situated to the east, south and west of the site with residential properties situated on the opposite side of the Watling Street dual carriageway.

To the south of the buildings is an area of hardstanding used as various playgrounds areas, fenced off in sections from the playing fields further to the south, There are two shipping containers sited on this hardstanding behind the main building in the far west of the property.

Relevant Planning History

03/2142/FL/E5: Extension to staffroom, Grant Permission Subject to Conditions, 04/02/2004

14/0681/FL: Single storey extension to provide new nursery and reception classrooms, associated toilets, cloakroom; food prep area and meeting room, Grant Permission Subject to Conditions, 27/06/2014

Relevant Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework

The NPPF sets out the Government's position on the role of the planning system in both plan-making and decision-taking. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, in economic, social and environmental terms, and it emphasises a "*presumption in favour of sustainable development*".

Key provisions of the NPPF relevant in this case:

- **NPPF 2 – Achieving sustainable development**
- **NPPF 4 – Decision Making**
- **NPPF 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities**
- **NPPF 11 – Making effective use of land**
- **NPPF 12 – Achieving well-designed places**
- **NPPF 13 – Protecting Green Belt land**
- **NPPF 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment**
- **NPPF 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**

On **planning conditions** the NPPF (para 55) says:

Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. Agreeing conditions early is beneficial to all parties involved. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided unless there is a clear justification.

On **decision-making** the NPPF sets out the view that local planning authorities should approach decisions in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available and work proactively with applications to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Pre-application engagement is encouraged.

Reducing Inequalities

The Equality Act 2010 (the '2010 Act') sets out 9 protected characteristics which should be taken into account in all decision making

Development Plan

www.go.walsall.gov.uk/planning_policy

Saved Policies of Walsall Unitary Development Plan

- GP2: Environmental Protection

- ENV32: Design and Development Proposals
- T13: Parking Provision for Cars, Cycles and Taxis
- LC6: Sports Pitches

Black Country Core Strategy

- CSP4: Place Making
- ENV2: Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness
- ENV3: Design Quality

Walsall Site Allocation Document 2019

OS1: Open Space, Sport and Recreation

GB1: Green Belt Boundary and Control of Development in the Green Belt

Supplementary Planning Documents

Designing Walsall

- DW2 Safe and Welcoming Places
- DW3 Character

Consultation Replies

Strategic Planning Policy - The school and its grounds lie in the Green Belt whilst the site of the proposed classroom is shown as part of open space site reference OS3047 on the Policies Map and referred to by SAD Policy OS1. Under Green Belt policy (SAD Policy GB1) it will need to be demonstrated either that the proposal is not inappropriate development under NPPF paragraphs 145, or that very special circumstances exist. The potential impact on the open space will need to be assessed under the NPPF paragraph 97.

Community Safety – No objection. Advise an autonomous lighting and alarm system be fitted to any stand-alone building on this site. As an addition to the site, the structure may be seen as easily accessed, additional attention should be paid to window locks and an anti-snap, bump and drill lock 3* should be fitted to the main point of access. Further advice on "designing out crime" can be obtained via Secured by Design.

Sport England – No objection. The proposed development does not fall within either our statutory remit or non-statutory remit, therefore Sport England has not provided a detailed response in this case.

West Midlands Fire Service – No objection subject to compliance with Part B of building regulations

Natural England – No objection

Archaeology – No objection

Pollution Control – No objection. The acoustic requirements of Building Bulletin 93 Acoustic Design of Schools - Performance Standards is relevant as a means of demonstrating compliance with the Building Regulations Approved Document E

Resistance to the Passage of Sound.

Local Highway Authority - No objection on the basis the development is not related to any increase in pupils or staff.

Representations

None

Determining Issues

- The principle of the development
- Design and Character of the Area
- Traffic and Highways

Assessment of the Proposal

The Principle of the Development

The erection of an additional building at the school would be regarded as inappropriate development within the Green Belt unless very special circumstances exist to outweigh the harm to the openness and character of the Green Belt.

The applicant explains the very special circumstances in this instance relate to the provision of additional class space which is acutely necessary in order to cater for existing pupils at the school. The additional classroom is required to allow the school to fulfil its teaching responsibilities. This need has been exacerbated due to the requirements for additional space created by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is considered that on balance these very special circumstances would outweigh any harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. Additional mitigating factors to outweigh the harm include:

- The building would be single storey with a mono pitched roof well below the height of the main school building.
- The proposals would not result in any additional hardstanding and the existing trees on the site would be unaffected by the proposals.
- The proposals would provide a very modest increase in footprint at the school, with the removal of the existing container, the nett increase would only be 40m²
- It is considered that this would not have any significant adverse impact on the openness or character of the Green Belt as the school extension is located in the already developed part of the site.

The school area is indicated as part of designated Open Space. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF indicates that the loss of open space can be justified where the space is surplus to requirements. The proposals would result in the loss of a very small area of existing playground space, which is laid out as hardstanding but is not part of a sports pitch. Sport England have not objected to the proposal, and there is existing sport and play area of almost 1ha which is considered more than adequate to accommodate the school, meaning the loss of 40m² in a poorly used and equipped area is considered not harmful. The proposal is therefore considered to be in line with paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

On balance, it is considered that the principle of the development can be considered acceptable.

Design and Character of the Area

The small scale of the addition is considered to mitigate the impact on the character of the area. The building would not be visible from the public realm on either Watling Street or on The Parade. The building would be set against a stand of existing trees to the west, and against the existing 1.5 storey brick wall of the school in the north which would soften its appearance and help it to integrate into the existing built environment providing a step down from the built portion of the site in the north to the high intensity play and bordered by vegetation in the centre to the more open area of sports pitched and fields beyond in the south.

The proposed modular building would be finished in blue which matches the coloured render accents of the modern extension to the main building adjacent located 15m to the west. This colour scheme is also in line with the school colours and uniform.

The community safety officer has recommended that additional safety and security measures are required to protect the building from crime. It is considered that due to the siting and stand-alone nature of the proposed building a condition should be applied to the decision notice to require additional security measures.

On balance the design of the proposal is considered to generally accord with the character of the area, and subject to a condition to improve the security of the building would create an acceptable environment for educational use.

Traffic and Highways

There is existing vehicular access from The Parade, which opens directly into the staff parking area.

The proposal does not include any increase in the number of pupils or staff at the school, and the Highways officer has not objected to the proposal on this basis. The proposal would not be to the detriment of highway safety and would therefore accord with NPPF paragraph 109.

Conclusions and Reasons for Decision

Very special circumstances exist for the construction of the building therefore the proposal is in line with Green Belt Policy GB1 of the SAD and NPPF paragraph 143. The site is an existing little used area that is surplus to requirement and therefore is in line with paragraph 97 of the NPPF and is supported by Sport England.

The design would match the existing adjacent building having little impact on the character of the area which complies with UDP policy ENV32.

The Highway Authority has not objected to the application as no alterations are proposed to the access arrangements and no increase in staff or pupils is proposed.

Taking into account the above factors it is considered that the application should be approved.

Positive and Proactive Working with the Applicant

Approve

Officers have confirmed to the applicant's agent that the submitted details are acceptable and no further changes have been requested.

Recommendation

Grant Planning Permission Subject to Conditions

1: The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory commencement of the development in accordance with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2: The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the following approved plans details and documents:

- Existing Block Plan D0R1, submitted 22/04/2020
- Proposed Block Plan D0R2, submitted 22/04/2020
- Proposed Plans and Elevations (including Location Plan), D0R3, submitted 22/04/2020
- Design and Access Statement, submitted 22/04/2020

Reason: To ensure that the development undertaken under this permission shall not be otherwise than in accordance with the terms of the application on the basis of which planning permission is granted, (except in so far as other conditions may so require).

3. The development shall be constructed to meet the following minimum security measures and thereafter retained for the lifetime of the development:

- The design of the building shall prevent features which aid scaling or climbing.
- All ground floor and vulnerable windows shall use minimum 6.8mm laminated glazing.
- Sills shall be steeply angled to prevent them being used as climbing aids, seats or litter points.
- All windows shall be fitted with restrictors.
- Glazing and glazing sizes shall to be kept to the minimum compatible with requirements of lighting, surveillance and visibility.
- External LED lights with daylight and movement sensors to be provided at all external entrances.

Reason: To ensure the safety and security of the development itself and the safety and security of patients, visitors and employees in accordance with Saved Policy GP2 of the Unitary Development Plan, DW2 of the Designing Walsall SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the external materials shown Plan D0R3 (Proposed Plans and Elevations) and the facing

materials shall thereafter be retained for the lifetime of the development

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development and to comply with saved policies GP2 and ENV32 of the Walsall Unitary Development Plan.

Notes for Applicant

West Midlands Fire service

Section 15: Vehicle access

Buildings not fitted with fire mains 15.1 For small buildings (up to 2000m², with a top occupied storey that is a maximum of 11m above ground level), vehicle access for a pump appliance should be provided to whichever is the less onerous of the following.

a. 15% of the perimeter.

b. Within 45m of every point of the footprint of the building (see Diagram 15.1).

15.2 For all other buildings, provide vehicle access in accordance with Table 15.1.

15.3 Every elevation to which vehicle access is provided should have a door, a minimum of 750mm wide, to give access into the building. The maximum distance between doors, or between a door and the end of the elevation, is 60m (e.g. a 150m elevation would need a minimum of two doors)

Design of access routes and hard-standings

15.7 Access routes and hard-standings should comply with the guidance in Table 15.2. Requirements can only apply to the site of the works. It may not be reasonable to upgrade the route across a site to a small building. The building control body, in consultation with the fire and rescue service, should consider options from doing no work to upgrading certain features, such as sharp bends.

15.8 Where access to an elevation is provided in accordance with Table 15.1, the following requirements should be met, depending on the building height. a. Buildings up to 11m, excluding small buildings (paragraph 15.1): pump appliance access should be provided adjacent to the building for the specified percentage of the total perimeter. b. Buildings over 11m: access routes should comply with the guidance in Diagram 15.2.

15.9 Where access is provided for high reach appliances in accordance with Table 15.1, overhead obstructions (such as cables and branches) should be avoided in the zone shown in Diagram 15.2.

15.10 Dead-end access routes longer than 20m require turning facilities, as in Diagram 15.3. Turning facilities should comply with the guidance in Table 15.2.

Overall

Access routes should have a minimum width of 3.7m between kerbs, noting that **WMFS appliances require a minimum height clearance of 4.1m and a minimum carrying capacity of 15 tonnes** (ADB Vol 2, Table 15.2)

Water

Water supplies for firefighting should be in accordance with ADB Vol 2, Sec 16 and "National Guidance Document on the Provision for Fire Fighting" published by Local Government Association and WaterUK:

<https://www.water.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/national-guidance-document-on-water-for-ffg-final.pdf>

For further information please contact the WMFS Water Office at the address given above or by email on Water.Officer@wmfs.net

The approval of Building Control will be required to Part B of the Building Regulations 2010

Early liaison should be held with this Authority in relation to fixed firefighting facilities, early fire suppression and access (ADB Vol 2, Section 8)

The external access provisions for a building should be planned to complement the internal access requirements for a fire attack plan. (CIBSE Guide E, Fire Safety Engineering 2010, p. 13-14)

Pollution Control

Pollution Control advises that the acoustic requirements of Building Bulletin 93 Acoustic Design of Schools - Performance Standards is relevant as a means of demonstrating compliance with the Building Regulations Approved Document E Resistance to the Passage of Sound.

END OF OFFICERS REPORT